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## CALIFORNIA JOE'S FIRST TRAIL.

A STORY OF THE DESTROYING  
ANGELS.BY COL. THOMAS HOYER MONSTERY,  
CHAMPION-AT-ARMS OF THE TWO AMERICAS.

MEMBER OF THE PIONEER CLUB OF FRISCO, AND AUTHOR OF "THE DEMON DUELIST," ETC., ETC.



JOE'S HORSE STAGGERED, THEN PITCHED FORWARD ON ITS HEAD, WHILE ALICE'S ANIMAL, WITH A SNOOT OF TERROR, SET OFF FULL SPEED.



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## A Story of the Destroying Angels.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE YOUNG ROVER.

Out on the green plains of the great West, before all history had parted from them; ere the scream of the locomotive had forever banished the buffalo and antelope, a small train of wagons was winding its way, following the great Overland Trail, a highway for all the restless spirits of the American Union, during the gold fever of the early days of California.

Just such trains were passing all the time, that year and several years before and after, for the fever was at its height, and San Francisco was in the process of development from a village of two or three hundred people to a city of twenty thousand inhabitants, in the space of three years or less.

When first those trains began to traverse the great plains they were compelled to go in large numbers for protection from the Indians, but, by the time the fever had lasted a year or so, the number of emigrants had so increased, and the Government had sent in so many troops that it was comparatively safe to travel. The trains were sometimes even single vehicles, to cross the plains with safety in most parts, other localities being dangerous and only to be traversed by large caravans, which accumulated at the various halting places, till enough fighting-men had been gathered to make the transit safe.

On the banks of the Kansas, close to the border between Independence, Missouri, and within range of the scouting parties from Fort Leavenworth, the perils of the passage had not yet become apparent, and the little caravan with which we have to do, numbered about four wagons and two hundred counted five able-bodied men for defenders of several women and children.

Around them spread the waving verdure of the low plains, not as yet replaced by the short "buffalo-grass" of the arid belt.

The current of the river slowly wound its way along, as the sun sank toward the west, the little train came to a halt by a place where the scent was practicable, where the horses were unhitched and turned out to feed, while the women of the party set to work to pitch the tents, which were pitched the tents in which they were to sleep. These men were all of the stamp of pioneers, that made California a land of such untiring energy, in its early history.

The oldest was a stout, farmer-looking person, about fifty, and it was easy to see that three of the other men were his sons, from the family likeness; the fifth member of the party was undoubtedly a stranger by blood to the rest, if not of another race altogether.

The Scott family owned three of the wagons of the little caravan, to which the other man whose name was Gabelle, had joined himself for protection—"mutual," he called it. In reality the protection was all one-sided, for Gabelle was a nervous Frenchman, and New England families had not been in his life before he came on the plains, while the Scotts, who were Tennesseans, were all hunters of more or less fame in their native county, and prepared to take care of themselves in any ordinary emergency.

Gabelle had brought with him his wife and a number of little children, and a good deal of baggage, and a capacity to chatter French and English indifferently, born of the habit of speaking one language in the family and another to strangers. Their mother was a French Canadian, and had been a cadaverous aspect, and she affected flannel short gowns and striped petticoats, that were washed with the necessity of her parties as a woman, and their mother, having come of New England stock originally, had preserved the habits of their ancestry and always looked neat and clean.

As the sun set, the parties gathered about the supper at their respective fires, and the difference in race was evident at a glance. The Tennesseans had nothing but the traditional "hog and hominy," while the Creoles had concocted a savory stew out of the carcasses of several prairie dogs or marmots, which the father of the family, who was practicing shooting all the while in the hope of becoming an expert and making a good knock down at their holes, as they harked in the sun.

Nothing coming amiss to Pierre Gabelle in the way of eating, he commenced a savor stew out of several rattlesnakes, which he had killed, in the same holes, along with one of the queer little owls which frequent the curious fraternity, and had made up all a savor stew, which his father had not been accustomed to, as it simmered away in the pot, in the process of warming-up, which preceded the supper; that supper being a remnant from the previous day.

Snake, owl and prairie dog, together, made a stew at which the Scotts turned up their noses, with all the prejudice of the horn Yankee and western man at anything which his father had not been accustomed; but the little Gabelles ate heartily at their own fire, while the Scotts devoured their pork

and fried hominy, in the proud consciousness that they were ever so much better than their neighbors.

Jim Scott, the eldest son of the house, was still crunching the last morsel of his supper, and looking toward the prairie to the east, when he ejaculated:

"By gosh, dad, that comes a stranger, jest too late fur grub."

Tom Scott turned his head to see what his son meant; when he saw the figure of a man on a lean, raw-boned mule, coming over a swell at a little distance, and said comfortingly:

"Waal, boy, the pork ain't all gone yet, and 'tain't much trouble to fry a little more. The stranger's welcome, I reckon. Tennessean ain't goin' back on a stranger, and he's honest, and don't looks, as fur as I kin see, as if he was a white man, and hungry."

Tom Scott, the second son, rose as the stranger rode in, and advanced to the edge of the little encampment, with the hospitable shout, from lungs of leather:

"Helloo, stranger, git off yer critter, and 'h'ist in some grub."

The stranger, now that he was near enough to be inspected, turned out to be a tall, raw-boned boy not much over twenty, of much the same make as the mule he bestrode, with a long face, set in a square jaw, and a pair of eyes that agreed well with his dress, to show him one who had not mingled much in any society save that of the frontier.

He was dressed in a suit of blue "Kentucky Jean," and a pair of old, worn-out, Indian moccasins, while his rough cow-hide boots were thrust into the pair of old rusty stirrups that looked as if they had come down from Noah's Ark, or something equally ancient.

He bore across the pommel of his low saddle of the common "citizen's" kind, an old rifle, long and heavy in the barrel, with a bore the size of a pea, and a scabbard, which was as familiar to the men at the halt of a huge butcher-knife, in a sheath, that looked as if it had seen a good deal of service.

Such was his appearance and equipment, and so strong in his mind was as familiar to the men at the fire, that Tom Scott added, as he shook hands warmly with the young stranger:

"Seems to me you come from our parts, stranger. You're name's Scott, from Tennessee, is it?"

"And I was raised in Lincoln county, Kaintuck; last hailin' from Cass county, Missouri," was the reply, with a grin that altered the whole expression of the face of the young stranger. "What have ye got in the pot, boys?"

He was dismounting from his horse as he spoke, and a few moments later, was shaking hands with the vigorous, well-to-do men of the party, while the good wife of Jim Scott, who had been cutting a new slice of pork, while the men were greeting the newcomer, turned to him and said:

"Git ready in a minit, stranger. Nothen' but hog and hominy; but ye're welcome to that."

The young man laughed good-naturedly as he replied:

"Reckin I kin struggle along on it, missis. Got anything in the jug, fellows?"

The hint seemed to be understood; for old Scott was already hauling the end, from the back of one of the wagons, a stout jug of familiar appearance, and he brought it to the young man, with the curt salutation:

"Help yourself, stranger, and drink hearty."

Then, at a signal from the old man, the whole party turned their backs at once, and seemed to be engaged in staring across the Nechoo, while the stranger, with a curt nod to his host, took up and held it suspended there, for the space of some half-minute, during which gurgling sounds proceeded therefrom, when he uttered a long sigh of satisfaction, breathed hard several times, and set down the jug, with the remark:

"Apple-jack, and prime, too. Mister, that 'ere's jest, and how long hev you 'en on the trail?"

Then, and not till then, the old farmer turned round to say:

"Take another horn. 'Twon't hurt ye."

"Thankee, mister; but it ain't the thing till I've 'histed in some grub. Any one could see you 'uns is from Tennessee. How long hev ye 'en on the road?"

"'Bout a month, since we left the old home-steed," the farmer replied, with a slight grin.

"Tain't easy to go, stranger; but when the stuns get in the corn, and the shag gets the claws on the place, what's done can't be helped, and the best way is to git up and git."

Then he added:

"Senec 'jested' long hev you 'en on the trail?"

"Senec 'jested' mornin'." the young man replied, with a smile that showed how jolly he could look on occasion. "I jest tied up to the nearest gal in the camp, about a month ago, and she gits the know. Dad allowed as how he'd 'ard a right smart sight about this Californy, and the old woman, the allers, and me, we hope fur to hum."

"I took the ole mule and lit out; and hyar I be, stranger."

"And what won't yer name be?" asked the farmer, who had turned the other toward the fire, where the hissing of the pan showed that the pork was nearly done.

The young man hesitated for a moment, and then said:

"Waal, stranger, I won't lie. My name ain't what it used ter be; but I'm haund to git to Californy or bust. My name's Californy Joe, 'ho or miss; and I'm haund to live."

"Bully for you, Californy Joe," responded Scott, amiably. "Ef you want to git thar, why shedn't

we jine carnyvans and git over the grouaud to gether, sosh' be like? Me and you cums from the same place, as might be, and I'm haund to choose atween Missourer, Kaintuck, and ole Tennessee—and we mou't as well go the trail together."

California Joe cast a scrutinizing look round the wagons, and what he saw there seemed to please him, for he said at once:

"Waal, mister, I'd be 'greeable, and the rest of the boys, I ain't the man to growl. I know when I'm well off, and I don't want to move out of this car."

It was settled at once, and California Joe was duly installed a member of the caravan, just as Jim Scott cried out:

"Gosh darn it all, hyar comes another man! Ef this goes on, dang, dang, I'll get an army order, or more."

The cause of his speech was the approach of another stranger, who was coming up on foot, leading a very small mule behind him.

### CHAPTER II.

#### OLD SIMPLICITY.

THE NEW-comer was as great a contrast to California Joe in appearance as could well be imagined. The Kentuckian was six feet two in his stockings, and a good deal taller than the other man, who was of medium height and slenderly built, to all seeming.

California Joe had the regular careless, daredevil look of the Western man, and he drank freely and fights as freely, while the stranger was as meek as Moses in his expression of face.

He wore his hair long and flowing, over his shoulders, which were of the shape of a fan, in color and straightness, while his clean-shaven face was as open and guileless as that of a child, and his mild blue eyes seemed as if they had never flashed in anger in the life of their owner.

His dress was as singular in that locality as the meekness of his face, for he wore a suit of black broadcloth, of the regular ministerial cut, with a "saddle" collar, and a high, stiff, black necktie, the uniform recognized all over the Union at that time as the habiliment of a preacher or exhorter of the Methodist persuasion.

Of weapons for protection he seemed to be guileless; for his only support in that line was a big umbrella, of the bulgiest kind, which he used as a walking-stick, as he came toward the camp, leading his mule and a small pack on his back.

This mule, of itself, had nothing remarkable about it, save the smallness of its size and the thickness of its legs. It trudged along under its load it was carrying, as if it did not mind it in the least, and appeared to be on the best terms with the man who was leading it, for it frequently rubbed its head against his arm, and seemed to be perfectly accustomed to be fed there and otherwise petted. This man seemed, as near as one could make out, from his light hair and shaven face, to be about forty years old.

He came up to the camp, where all men and women, stared at him stupidly, and taking off his broad-brimmed hat, said with a benevolent smile:

"Friends, all the Lord be with ye. Can a simple man and guileless-mane his camp with ye, for protection from the ravening beasts and the savage men of the plain, that devour and spare not?"

The words, which were uttered in a tone in which he spoke were those which had often been heard by the men he addressed, for the itinerant Methodist circuit-riders was quite a common character in that part of the country, and it was in both that froze them up, for the hospitality which they had shown to California Joe vanished entirely. The Scotts kept their seats by the fire, and the Scotts looked over his shoulder at the new-comer to say:

"The preerie's wide enough, stranger. Ye kin go inter camp whar ye like, I s'pose."

But the whole affair, under all slightly, as if he had expected a courteous reception, Scott added:

"Don't tie that mule too near them of mine, or mebbe he'll have trouble. They kin kick bad, and I don't want to see no blood shed."

A faint smile crossed the benevolent features of the strange man in black, and he said:

"Thanks, friend; but little Charity can take care of herself, and I'll put you to any more inconvenience than I can help."

So saying, he led the small mule away from the immediate vicinity of the camp, and proceeded toward the whole affair, and he showed him to be by no means unused to camping out.

He loosened the girth of the pack-saddle and lifted it off the little mule, and laid it down on the grass; led the animal down to the river to drink, and then staked her out in a place where the grass was thick and luxuriant, but at a distance of some twenty rods from the camp, when she felt to work with an appetite that showed her to be in good condition for a journey.

Then he opened his pack, and produced therefrom a whole lot of stores of all kinds, with which he proceeded to make his solitary camp at a little distance from the rest. He did not even come near their fire to borrow a stick, but he himself fired the bank of the river, and made his fire for himself.

The Scotts watched him with a sense that they had been churlish in their reception, and the young Kentuckian who had joined them colored slightly as he looked at the quiet, meek man, who was making his camp at a distance of some twenty rods from the parish unity to associate with the rest.

At last California Joe said to Tom Scott:

"Seems like a simple ole feller. Wonder ef he



Then he suddenly leaped in the air, with an



agility that Joe had never seen in a human being before, and planted both heels in the face of the Teunessean, knocking him back on the grass, with his eye like a corpse, struck senseless by that single blow.

Then the meek-looking man started to the fire, where the other two Scott boys were staring at the fray, and observed coolly:

"I'm no brother, while the hand of the Lord is on me, I may as well mistle Beilal to the earth. Is there another of the family that wants to be converted from the error of his ways?"

Jim Scott and his brother Bob stared at this remarkable personage, and Jim with some little tremor in his voice, said:

"Thankee, stranger, but I ain't no hog. I don't want nothin' to do with ye."

The deacon smiled, with the same benevolence that had marked his nien all along, as he said:

"Friend, thou art wotter fer fightin' this. How is it with yo'?" While the spirit of the Lord is on me, I must be up and doing. It would be a good work to convert a whole family from the ways of darkness."

Bob grinned.

"Thankee for nothin', stranger," he said. "The old man hadn't orter gone whar he did, and I ain't the one to har him fust fer fightin' this."

The deacon aughed, as he replied:

"Then let us have peace, hereafter. The Lord be with you."

Then he walked back to his own little tent, and was going inside, when old Scott gave a groan, and California Joe took him up in his strong arms, and helped him away, saying as he did so:

"He's wotter fer fightin' this, and now 'tain't no time to squeal, Scott."

The deacon looked after them as they went, the farmer not able to walk, but supported by the big, young-looking young man, and something in the affair seemed to strike him in a ludicrous light, for he laughed to himself, and re-entered his tent, where he was sitting alone most of the time.

The deacon walked, and the first peep of dawn found the Scotts out of the tent, getting breakfast ready, while the French family, having finished their story, the night before, were sitting down to the same salt pork and soddin' bread, cooked in a fryin'pan, which was the staple fare of the Scotts. As for the deacon, that worthy man was up before day, and he saw him go down to the river and wash himself, with a care and precision that was a revelation to the Scott family, and still more to the little Gabelles, who did as little washing as they possibly could most of the time.

Then he came back to his little mule, struck his curious tent, and began to cook his simple breakfast, which he did in a way that showed he was used to the life of a hunter.

The Scotts looked rather sulky that morning, and when the wagon was ready to start, the old man took the reins, and went off across to prairie, without a word, and the boys, who were California Joe, who, on his part, did not appear to care much what they did.

When the Gabelles started out, the deacon and Joe went with them, the Scotts being far ahead.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A HOLY GUY.

THE way of the Lord is a caravan that day, lay through a beautiful, green, waving prairie, with the grass up to the horses' bellies, as soon as the broad trail was left, and for it was early spring and everything at its best.

California Joe rode ahead of the Gabelle wagon, and the deacon walked beside him, leading the big, young-looking young man, who was California Joe, who, on his part, did not appear to care much what they did.

Joe's mule was a big, ungainly animal, not fast, but stanch and untrifling, and it had a swift walk, which is a great desideratum in a long march.

The deacon seemed to be able to march as fast as the mule, for he carried nothing but the umbrilla, and he had his long coat on the load, before starting, that morning.

They soon outstripped the wagon of the Gabelles, and came up with that of the Scotts, which was also slowly along, and the trail was a long one, with the ruts in the trail, and the numerous holes of the marmots, which infested that part of the prairie.

California Joe, as he passed the wagon at a distance, saw a hunter, who was on one side, called Jim Scott, who was driving the leaders, and called out:

"Mornin', Jim. Haow dy'e feel this mornin'?"

Jim's reply was a scowl, as he answered:

"You kin stick to yer old deacon, hy rum; but he'd best look outter haow he comes round our camp, and monsoon, or he'll get pluzged by us."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Joe, surprised at the tone of the man who had given him, the night before, the most friendly greeting.

"The matter is that dad's got a pain in his side, and it's all that infernal skunk, that jumped on him," said Jim, savagely. "Don't ye come nigh hyar, or I'll shoot ye, or I'll pluzge ye. It ain't no rough-and-tumble now; but ye'll find out mon' ye like, ef ye come too close."

California Joe was about to answer angrily, for the old man was so much provoked to find his hot young blood, when the deacon laid his hand on the young man's arm, and said, in a low voice:

"This no wrong quarreling about, young man, I broke two of his ribs, and he hath cause to feel sore about it. Let us go on."

The words struck Joe as sensible, for he did not want to pick quarrels with men who had certainly

treated him with hospitality the night before, whatever their course toward the inoffensive stranger; so he rode on past the Scott wagon with his new companion, and soon had gotten far ahead, so slow was the progress of the heavily-loaded vehicles as compared with the progress of the two unimpeded men.

Thus they rode along for several miles, when Joe observed:

"Right smart little mule you've got that, deacon. Carries a heap more'n one 'ud give him credit for."

Simply Joe nodded.

"Charity is a faithful beast, but she hath her faults, friend."

"Ay, and wot's one of 'em?" asked Joe.

"She will allow no man to ride her, save myself," was the response of Simplicity.

Joe grinned.

"I call myself some on the mule, and never seen a mule or hoss I c'dn't straddle as long as they stood up on their legs. Reckin I kin ride that mule, any time, fur the rest of my life."

The deacon shook his head as he said, solemnly:

"Friend, thou talkest after the manner of the world. My religion forbids me to make wagers, and I don't want to cast a swift, suspicious glance at the world, when thou shalt have a chance at Charity, if thou wilt."

Joe laughed.

"I don't care, deacon; we'll try it when the rest come up. You air a rum kind of a snoozer, anyhow. To look at ye, one 'ud think ye c'dn't melt butter in yer maw, but ye kin fight like all the old deacons in your church the same as you he!"

The deacon was trudging along beside the mule, with his eyes bent on the ground, as Joe spoke. He had the reins and cast a swift, suspicious glance at the tall Kentuckian, as he said evasively:

"Friend, I do not profess to be a fighter, or I sh'd not be out here, to the glory I am. My creed is to be at peace with all men, and do harm to none. Is thine any better?"

Joe colored slightly. He was a young fellow who had been a hunter, and he was not used to such a life, and he knew that the Western men, though but little of anything but the present.

But he had a respect for religion, like all of his kind, and he was not a disrespectful man.

"Waal, deacon, I ain't got 'round pickin' quarls with no man; but I must say that, when I seen yo' fust, I thought you must be crazy."

Joe smiled, as he said, and then, turning his blue eyes mildly on the young man.

Joe hesitated.

"Waal, waal—cause—cause—ye see, thar's a heap of injun in the plains, thes' little mule, and ye hain't got so much as a pistol about ye."

"True," was the tranquil reply, "and in that the time may come when thou shalt see that I was right and thou wrong. I am a hunter, and I am the powers of that rifle thou thinkest so highly of in the face of a war-party of the U. S. or Cheyennes, when we come into their country? They would riddle thee with arrows, ere thou couldst fire more than one shot."

Joe looked at his long Kentucky rifle with a glance of half-sad, half-affectionate interest, as he said:

"I dunno but what ye're about right thar. I've h'd a good deal about these new-fangled things called rifles, and I know 'em, but I ain't got 'em. I'd know how to use 'em, ef I had one of 'em. Old Brownie, hyar, 's got to do me till I git to Californy. I reckon, Sh'll get some, anyhow, and that's what I want."

They were all alone as he spoke, in the midst of a sea of waving grass, the river-bottom being here many miles wide, and the grass so high as to cut off a great part of the horizon. Out of a little clump of bushes just ahead of them at that very moment jumped a deer, almost under the feet of Joe's mule, and was bounding off, when the Kentuckian threw himself forward, and, following the flying animal for a few bounds, his eye glancing along the barrel, fired.

The deer gave a lofty leap in the air as the rifle cracked, and he fell all in a heap, dropped in its tracks as natty as the thing could have been done.

The deacon looked at the feat with a silent but approving air, as he remarked:

"That's the way to do it, straight, and after thou hast been on the plains a little longer, thou wilt make a scout and guide."

Something in the tone struck Joe; for he cast his eyes at the deacon, as he remarked:

"Why, deacon, to hyar you talk, one 'ud think you'd 'en on them afore yerself."

Simplicity smiled, as he answered, tranquilly: "That's the way to do it, straight, and after thou hast been on the plains a little longer, thou wilt make a scout and guide."

"That's the way to do it, straight, and after thou hast been on the plains a little longer, thou wilt make a scout and guide."

They went forward to where the deer lay, and Joe, dismounting, took out his knife with the intention of skinning the animal, and following the firing animal for a few bounds, his eye glancing along the barrel, fired.

The first he carried no further than to make room for the deacon to take the animal, and he was a hind-quarters and saddle being put behind Joe's saddle, while little Charity had the fore-quarters for her share of the load.

Then the deacon had made the arrangement, the Scott wagon was coming up fast in the rear, and the vehicle of Gabelle was catching up with it, as the horses toled forward through the long grass, to-

ward the distant Kansas, which they had left at daybreak to cut off a curve, and which now glinted, like a silver thread, far before them, at a ford where the trail crossed the river, as it did several times in the course of the journey.

As the Scotts came up, they cast a curious glance at the game the hunters had secured; and Joe, thinking it a good time to make peace, called out to Jim Scott, who was riding the big young mule.

"What's the use of growling over a deer? Hyar we've got a pile of good venison, and if you want it, say the word. Thar's more'n we kin eat; ye air sure."

The overture seemed not to be without effect, for the sulky look vanished from Jim's face, to a grateful smile, as he said:

"I'll take 'em when ag'in you, Joe. Who shot the deer? Ef it were me, all right."

"Waal it were me, and no mistake," said Joe, and he patting the head of the young mule affectionately as he spoke. "Old Brownie, hyar, ain't he a hearse-on-off-hand shot, and don't you furgit it, Jim Scott. When ye get a little further out on the plains, ye may need her, and he sorry ye told me to go away."

Here the face of the elder Scott peered out of the front of the wagon, behind his son, and he curiously asked:

"He ain't that feller they call the deacon?"

"Here am I, friend," was the untrifled reply, as the deacon advanced near the wagon. "Truly I am sorry to hear that I hurt thee more than I had intended, but thou shalt alondest thine evil designs. I am ready to do thee any wrong, and if the plains will do the rest. Where is the pain?"

Old Scott pressed his hand to his right side, with a pained gasp, and he groaned, that it was evident that he was not feigning.

"It's hyar—hyar, all round thar. It cuts like a knife, when I draw a breath."

"Then thou art hurt from the wagon, and we will go into camp by the river yonder. We can do no traveling till thou art out of pain, but the fracture is not serious."

The wagon turned toward the distant river, and soon approached the banks, where the camp was pitched, and the old farmer taken from his wagon and laid on the grass by the water-side.

His mild, but noble-looking son, starting at the strange figure of the deacon, with a superstitious awe that told how his conduct, the night before, had impressed them. There were in the Scott household besides the mother three daughters-in-law, wives of Tom, Jim, and Bob, with two of the Scott girls, proper, Martha and Lucinda; and both hearty, fine-looking girls, with the fresh complexion of the mountains from which they had come, and the taws and sinews of Hebes.

These girls especially stared at the long flaxen locks of the deacon, with a wondering, like admiration; for, now that he could be seen in daylight, he was a decidedly handsome man, spite of his disfiguring dress.

As the deacon, in perfect silence, he examined the farmer carefully, and manipulated his side, amid groans of pain from the impatient old man, till at last he said:

"O there, then, the ends of the ribs are together now; but the patient needs perfect quiet. If he moved for the next two weeks, he will not be able to heal the injury. You must make the best of it by camping in this spot. Luckily the grass is good, and from the look of the land, there is plenty of game to be found, all round here."

He spoke very coolly, as if the waiting spell he suggested, and the waiting of the common, but old Scott at once said:

"Tain't no possible, deacon. We hain't got more'n enough pork to last us to the mauncitings, and ef we can't stay hyar, I'll hev to be kerried some-how."

Deacon Simplicity nodded.

"There is sense in what you say, friend, and if thou art on your going forward, and art not so much incensed with me, for having hurt thee in my own defense, to disdain my help. I can show thee a way in which you canst go forward, and be cured at the same time."

"Howt howt?" asked Scott, eagerly. "Tell me the way, and I'll give in that you're the best man at a rough-and-tumble I ever seen in my life—and that ain't a little from me, stranger."

A slight, contemptuous smile curled the lip of the strange deacon, as he replied:

"That is not much, friend. When the strength of the Lord is on his servants they can do wonders. Thou must be handicapped up by me and laid in the wagon again, while I take the rest of the caravans go, which shall end in leaving thee safe and sound. The road by which I shall lead thee shall be one where thou shalt find peace and rest, and I will deliver thee from the peril of the wilderness."

There was something in the way he spoke, and the expression of his countenance that struck the simple farmer with awe; for he saw an ignorant man like most of his kind—the crackers of the South—and he dropped his jaw, as he said:

"Why, stranger, hyer you 'en hyar before?"

The deacon bowed his head.



"Friend, there is not a path in these plains, a pass in the mountains that I have not traversed till I know every blade of grass."

The Scotts boys gazed on him with more awe than before as he spoke, and Jim Scott asked:

"Why, who in thunder are you then?"

The deacon raised his head, and a proud look shrouded his face as he answered:

"I am an Indian hunter, and I know now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Enough that I alone can lead ye through the perils of the way. Will ye trust me, or shall I go? I can take my own path as I list, and I guarantee the safety of those who follow me. I will not lift his hand against me. The hand of the Lord is on me and my people, and we are safe in the den of lions."

He and the Tennessees stared at this mysterious personage as he spoke, with something of fear; but the emotion faded away as the old man said, faintly:

"We've got to trust ye, stranger; for fur ye showed us ye kin yip whi all creation of ye please. Take us whar ye will."

The joyful satisfaction illumined the pale face of Deacon Simplicity, and he made the bandages for the old man's ribs, in a deft way, that showed he knew a good deal of surgery.

Then the party went into camp for the afternoon.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### THE MIDDLE PARK.

Two months after the start of the little caravan of the Scotts and Gabelles went into camp by the borders of the Kansas river, the same wagons were in the midst of the mountain ranges of the Sierra Madre, and the little party of men and mules, the State of Colorado, passing through the "Middle Park," and a long way beyond the site of the present city of Denver.

The wagon of the caravan rode California Joe, on his faithful mule; his long Kentucky rifle on the pommel of the saddle in front of him.

The deacon beheld the strange air, as he rode along, which showed that he had changed considerably, since the day when he first came upon the plains, a green boy, with no knowledge of the life of the savages, that common to any man, who has been a hunter.

There was a self-reliant look on his face; a dark bronzed hue on his cheek, that told of a man who was used to the life of the wilderness; and his glance traveled over the mountains round him, with the assured glance of one who knows where he is, spite of the strangeness of the scenery.

The wagons behind him were of the same rickety appearance they had when they first halted by the Kansas; and the little Gabelles looked about as dirty as they did when they first started. The only change in the equipment of the party was that there were several Indian ponies or bronchos, which he had picked up from varasabon tribes on the way, as they traveled, and which he had taken to himself.

California Joe was alone, in advance of the expedition, his eye roving over the landscape, and he was talking to himself; a habit he had grown into, in the solitude of the wilderness, being naturally very loquacious and ready to talk to himself, rather than have no listener.

Joe, he was saying, "seems to me that if your old man were here, he'd kinder think you was on a bad trail. Hyar we be, two months on the road, and not half-way there, while the deacon wants us to go to another place altogether. I dunno what it is with him. He don't know his own mind, but he won't ha' brung us all the way he has, and nary an Injun teched us; but that's suthin' about that feller, that I'm gittin' to kinder mistrust. He talks too much religion for a man that lives among Injuns, and he knows too much about their ways."

The young hunter cast his eyes round him, on the great valley which he was, and he saw a rolling grass, interspersed with clumps of noble trees, was surrounded, at a distance of nearly a hundred miles, by the lofty, rugged peaks of the Sierras, and he saw a fortified fortification thrown round the Park, to protect it from outside foes.

It had been a paradise for the Indian hunters but a few years before, but the great march of civilization and the establishment of forts in the vicinity had rendered it comparatively safe for the transit of large caravans of wagons, if accompanied by a force of soldiers. He knew that the deacon had thought that a party was likely to be snapped up by some roving band of Arapahoes or Cheyennes, who had their hunting-grounds in the Park from time immemorial, and he had seen a white man with extreme jealousy.

Yet into this paradise of game and Indians, the little party of men and mules had come, and he had penetrated, without seeing an Indian so far; and California Joe was acting as guide to the caravan, and he had never had a single word of complaint before—taking for his course a series of landmarks, which had been impressed on his mind by Simplicity the day before, when the strange being had left him, as he said, "on a pilgrimage which he could not explain."

He had taken the small mule and ridden away in a deep wood, promising to return before morning, for he had a night's work to do. He had not come back; but he had told Joe that, in case he was detained by something he could not explain there would be no difficulty in finding the trail that was to lead to the land of gold by a short trail, which, Joe, the deacon, would guarantee as absolutely safe.

Now the sun was getting low, on the second day, and the caravan was waiting for the old man, as Joe thought of all the difficulties that surrounded

him, and the people who were with him, a thrill of something very like fear came over him, for he remembered that they were alone in the Park, a hundred miles from the nearest fort, and that there were six women in the party.

The regular trail of the emigrants to California lay considerably to the south of the route the deacon had persuaded them to take, though of this the ignorant party knew nothing, and he had no idea of one of the party, save Joe, had any idea of reading or writing, and the sight of a map was a mystery of mysteries to them.

The only means of knowing that they had left the great trail was the fact that they missed the broad plain marks of the wheels that had made the thoroughfare of the emigrant trains a white road, and a track in the Eastern States, save for its roughness.

But where they were none knew, and they were the more in the power of the deacon in that they were unacquainted with the use of the compass and had never been in that part of the plains before.

It was no wonder, therefore, that Joe felt decidedly uneasy, and that the fact he had never looked at, and then glanced back at the wagons and the faces of the girls, peeping out from the curtains in front of them.

The young hunter was, in fact, the only one of the party who was capable of appreciating the danger they were in; for he was the only one who could read a map, and he had a faint idea of the country with him, when he started from his home in Missouri, a map of the great trail, over which he pored in secret, when he could get a chance, unobserved by any one.

Had he been asked why he did this, and especially why he took care that the deacon should not catch him at his studies, he would have found the answer hard to give. It was only so that he had been in sight of the mountains, that he had begun to mistrust the deacon in any manner, and he had been very sure that the deacon had been in the wrong, with a fair measure of success, since he had come among the peaks that were easily recognizable and laid down in the map.

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The deacon looked the same as ever, and rode on straight toward the tree, in front of which Joe had erected his white flag.

He cast a glance up the valley, where the white hills of the old-fashioned one-story wagons were plainly to be seen, and he smiled the while, as if he took a better view. The young hunter, on his part, did not stir from his concealment, partly because he did not wish to attract the deacon's attention, and partly because he had a sudden notion to find what the deacon would do, when he was alone.

The strange man looked up the valley for a little space, and then he turned to the right. Joe's mule was feeding, where he unsaddled his own beast and lay down under the tree, as if he waited for the coming up of the wagons.

Joe had had time to run to one side, out of his way, now came closer, as if in curiosity; and before long, Joe saw that one of them was within gunshot, from his own position.

Leaving old Brownie, he pulled the trigger, and the deer dropped in his tracks.

Peering through the smoke at the deacon, whom he expected to see start at the report of the gun, Joe saw that he had not stirred his position in the slightest; and muttering, "Well, he is a cool cuss," the young hunter reloaded his piece and stepped out of his concealment, advancing toward the deer.

It lay within fifty feet of the deacon, while the other animals had run off frightened at the sound of the gun.

Joe started himself boldly and walked up to the deer, when he was saluted by the voice of Simplicity, saying in the most commonplace way:

"That was a good shot, friend Joseph; but if I had not been so sure that you could not hit what you had not seen, you would have run, that you could not have hit it."

"Why not?" asked Joe.

"Because they would have run up the valley, had I started them. But the deer of this vale know me well, and fear me not."

Joe was puzzled again at the familiarity this singular man displayed with the scenery and characteristics of the wilderness.

"Why, deacon," he said, "ye talk as if ye knew 'em all. 'Ve b'en kinder thinkin' where we've come on the right track arter all, sence we've got inter this valley."

Deacon Simplicity cast a quick glance at him from under his eyelashes, with his blue eyes half-shut, and he said, "You are right, but you would look on occasion glance very different from the usual wide-open stare of his clear orbs."

Then he said quietly:

"Friend Joseph, there is but one thing to do in the wilderness, and that is to trust to thy guide. Thou art young yet, and hast thy way to make; but already I can trust thee alone to take a train to the mountains. I will not follow thee on purpose to test thee, and thou hast done well. In a little while I may go away again for a longer time, and before thou art gone, I will have a plainman and mountain-man, as well as the best of them."

Joe was flattered by the words of the deacon, and he said, "Thank you, deacon."

"Deacon, if I thought I could ever make a good guide, and be able to live on the prairie, the same as them fellers they tell about that feller Killebuck, I would have been all hunk. But ye don't think I could do it, ye?"

"Not only do I think it; but I know it, friend Joe, and this I tell ye, that if thou wilt be content to trust yourself to me, I will follow thee, and I will give thee marks that I shall tell thee now, I am content to go away again, and trust thee to take the train along for another week."

Joe could only smile.

"Would ye, really, deacon?"

"I would. I have business that I cannot explain that will take me away; but that need not make any difference to thee. I trust thou wilt see the wagons on alone for a week more without me to guide thee?"

Joe hesitated.

"Deacon, I am sure, deacon, ain't it? I never were in these mountains afore, and now I make a mistake."

"I will give thee as plain directions as I did when I was here before. Canst thou follow them as thou wilt? Thou hast come to the very place that I laid out for the camp of to-day."

"Reckin I kin, deacon."

The deacon rose up at once, for he had been looking thoughtful and depressed when Joe first saw him.

The wagons were still some miles and a half from where they were sitting by the tree, and their approach was slow and tedious, for the mules were tired after the long trip.

The deacon pointed to the lofty cone of Long's Peak, and began to give his directions.

"Thou wilt keep that peak behind thee, as far as thou canst see it, till thou comest to a pass in the mountains, and then follow the side of this Park. Thou wilt know the pass when thou comest to it, by mountain, cleft in twin like the saddle of a pony, on the right hand, and the way lies straight through that pass, and then thou wilt come to a loamy plain, with the tops of the hills all round it, save to the west, and thy course will be due west. In the morning thou wilt have the sun rise over the hills, and it will shine on thy face. When thou startest in the morning, be careful to take some objects before thee, in a line, in the direction thou wouldst go, and keep them sighted all the while it comes to thee to travel at night, then take the north star for thy guide, and keep it on thy right hand as thou goest. On the straight trail thou wilt come to a river, which has fords at most places. The wagons will

#### CHAPTER VI.

##### THE DEACON SPEAKS OUT.

AS soon as the young hunter saw the deacon, he drew a long breath of satisfaction; for he had been very uneasy at the absence of their reverend guide; and the sight dispelled all these thoughts in an instant.



cross it, without difficulty. Thou wilt keep on, over this plain, till thou comest to the mountains on the other side thereof, and wilt strike for a pass in the range, which is marked by all the mountains sloping off to the north-west and west. Travel along the foot of the chain, which thou wilt see, running from the east to the west, and when thou comest to a pass in an angle—a corner, where another chain of foot-hills in from the south—I will be with thee. Dost thou comprehend?"

"Joe, who had been listening intently, nodded. "Reckin I do, deacon."

"There are others here no-d that I should stay," said Simplicity, rising from his recumbent posture. "I will ride over to the wagons, and tell them that I am going away."

"Hold on," interrupted Joe suddenly. "See hyar, deacon. Why in thunder shelt you be goin' off at all naow, when we want ye wust? It don't look right naow."

"The deacon frowned slightly, and the face that had been so guileless in its expression grew dark as he said slowly:

"Friend Joseph, it cannot be that thou mistrustest me?"

"Waal, deacon, if ye want to talk that way," replied Joe frankly, "I do not think it air the squar."

"But we must trust ye to us in this ayar desert, to leave us, for a week at a time, and make a feller gibe what's never ben hyar before. It don't look right, that air it."

"Deacon Simplicity listened intently to him, and his face cleared as he said, with his most winning smile:

"That is different, friend Joseph. I will tell thee what I am going to do. I will take us in these dangerous foes around thee who are watching thee every move. Their eyes are on thee now."

Joe started slightly, and looked round him, up at the foot-hills, and down at the plain.

"What? what, deacon? What air they?"

"The deacon waved his hand.

"In all directions, Thou art not an odd hand at this business as I am, and knowest me the keenness of sight of the red-man. There are in the foot-hills, in all directions, Indians on the watch for this train, and I am the only man that can save thee from their claws. That is what I am going to do. I will save as thou seest, for they know me as a jst man and belonging to just men, who have never wronged them."

"Then why," asked Joe, with the native shrewdness of his training, "did ye bring us hyar, deacon, when we mout hev gone by the other trail, whar there wos no Indians?"

"The deacon smiled in the same enraging way that he had shown all along till Joe had shown suspicion of him.

"I brought thee, and thy friends hither, friend Joseph, that they might come to the promised land by a path that would be safe, under my guidance, though under that of no other save a man of my trust. I am sure that they will be well, and I will show mistrust, and thou wilt force me to leave thee to take care of thyself and the women in thy keeping."

"The words of the mysterious deacon made Joe more uneasy than ever."

"Look a hyar, deacon," he said, rising, with a frown on his face that showed he was getting angry. "I don't trust the deacon, and I will be well, and I will show mistrust, and thou wilt force me to leave thee to take care of thyself and the women in thy keeping."

"The deacon listened to him tranquilly.

"Then it is settled that thou wilt not trust the man that has brought thee through the wilderness; and I will be well, and I will show mistrust, and thou wilt force me to leave thee to take care of thyself and the women in thy keeping."

"Joe hesitated.

"I ain't got as far as that, deacon. But I say you ain't actin' squar, and you know it."

"He was standing by the deacon as he spoke, and not thinking of anything but what he was saying, the words of the deacon about Indians having set him to looking all over the valley to see he could spy any sign of them."

"Deacon Simplicity stepped up beside him, and laid his hand on the arm of the excited young hunter."

"Wilt thou listen to me a moment, friend Joseph?" he said quietly.

"Joe turned toward him, and saw that the blue eyes of the other were fixed on him with a strange expression. Something in the glance subdued him so far that he said:

"Listen on, deacon. I'll listen."

"The deacon pointed up the valley to a place where the foot-hills ran into the plain, the slope covered with woods."

"The deacon said that wood?" he remarked, with the same impassive air as before. "If I leave thee in anger, or if anything happens to me while I am with thee, there are a hundred or more of Indians in that wood, who will come out on thee at once, and I cannot restrain them. If I go from thee in peace, I can send them away, and the way will be safe if thou followest the road I bid thee. What sayest thou? Wilt thou have peace or war? If it be war, here I am, unarmed, and thou hast a rifle. My life is in thy hand. Take it if it will please thee."

"The deacon's words had a powerful effect on the young hunter, and he removed from thee thy only friend."

"He stood by the young man, looking into his eye, with the same fearless glance as before, and Joe felt ashamed of his suspicion."

"I don't wanter kile ye, deacon," he said, in a rather shame-faced tone. "But ye must allow ye habn't done the squar thing hye, in not tellin' us about the Inguns till naow."

Deacon Simplicity smiled in a pitying way, that had its effect on the simple Kentuckian.

"And wherefore have I hidden it from thee? Because I knew that if it were to be told to the men in yonder caravan, the simple, silly natives would have taken fright, and they would never have come this way. But thou art not the same. Young man, I have marked thee well, and there is that in thee which will make thee a leader among men, if thou hast the wit and the courage that I think thou hast. Trust me, and when we meet again we will talk more of this matter. Thou art seeking thy fortune, and I will make thee a leader among men, and put thee above prizes, if thou wilt."

Joe stared at him, surprised; for it was the first time the other had spoken in such a strain to him.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SCOTTS GET RELIGIOUS.

The deacon, who had been so kind, as he said what he did. His blue eyes blazed, and his air was that of a prophet, while the young hunter was awed in spite of himself, and asked:

"Why, what d'ye mean?"

The deacon paused and looked round him for near a minute, before he spoke.

There was, for the first time, an air of doubt about him, as if he hesitated to say what he wanted to say.

At last, as if he had made his decision, he addressed Joe directly:

"At this time, thou hast come to the plains to get a fortune; is it not so?"

"Waal, yes, I did; but I don't see much chance of that. I was the rather shor' to rely on Joe."

"Hush! and I will saddle the mule and get on in less time than thou canst by going to the mine; a way in which thou canst be rich once and I lowered by all ways that I can be the willing to take the way?"

asked the deacon.

"Sartin I would, and I'd be a darned fool if I wouldn't!" replied Joe instantly.

"Hush! and I will saddle the mule and get on in less time than thou canst by going to the mine; a way in which thou canst be rich once and I lowered by all ways that I can be the willing to take the way?"

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Latter Day Saints, 'cause they say as how the Lord sent a message to them, right out of the sky, and thar gwine to conquer the hull 'arth after thar done. He tells me haow they hev a reg'lar city, and the goodness, they call Deseret, whar every one's happy."

Joe scratched his head. To him all this was gibberish, for he had never heard the name of the great community that sett'd in the Salt Lake district, and the jargon of the 'Latter Day Saints' was strange to him. But there was something about him, so much shrewdness than his simple 'cracker' companion, that he made it out, and he said again:

"Air ye sure that's the name of the church, Jim? Air ye s'rs it ain't the Mormons?"

Jim nodded furiously, and turned on his companion, asking:

"Who told you anything about them? That's what the wicked call 'em and the Gentiles; but the Latter Day Saints—that's what they are. And what's more, Joe, I ain't gwine to hyar any man say a word ag'in 'em."

"Joe was puzzled and hardly knew what to do; so he changed his tack, and asked:

"And do you mean that you and the hull family is a-gwine to turn Mormons?"

"I t'inks I do, and I want to hyar 'em called no names!" cried Jim, angrily. "We're runnin' this machine, and yer don't like it, you kin take your old mule and go."

The wagons coming up just at this time interrupted the angry altercation, for Jim rode off to attend to the leaders, while Joe found himself alone, watching the train.

He had noticed, during the journey from the Kansas, that the deacon had become very intimate with the Scots, but had attributed that to the cre he had taken, but he made it out, and he said again:

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"Who told you anything about them? That's what the wicked call 'em and the Gentiles; but the Latter Day Saints—that's what they are. And what's more, Joe, I ain't gwine to hyar any man say a word ag'in 'em."

"Joe was puzzled and hardly knew what to do; so he changed his tack, and asked:

"And do you mean that you and the hull family is a-gwine to turn Mormons?"

"I t'inks I do, and I want to hyar 'em called no names!" cried Jim, angrily. "We're runnin' this machine, and yer don't like it, you kin take your old mule and go."

The wagons coming up just at this time interrupted the angry altercation, for Jim rode off to attend to the leaders, while Joe found himself alone, watching the train.

He had noticed, during the journey from the Kansas, that the deacon had become very intimate with the Scots, but had attributed that to the cre he had taken, but he made it out, and he said again:

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But the native caution of his race made him keep down the angry retort which came to his lips; and the first sprit of the craft which was to make him a great scout and guide came to his help, as he said quietly:

"Why, it's peace, in coorse, Scott. I ain't no fool, to want to fight a hull camp, put up yer shooter. We hain't got nothen to quar'labout, as I know."

Scott looked doubtfully at him; for there was something in the ignorant, brutal nature of the farmer that made him hesitate at giving up the advantage of his horse, while he carried a revolver, and Joe was unarmed.

"That's all right," he said. "But don't ye be talkin' ag'in the Saints no more, or it'mout be bad fur ye."

Then he turned away to his own fire, and Joe, with a heavy heart went to that of the Ga'elles, whom he found already at their supper, with the same company of people who know little and care less for what is going on around them, if it does not affect their happiness for the moment.

The Ga'elles had got into the habit of making their camp at a little distance from that of the Scotts, and keeping by themselves, chattering French to each other, and it was to them that Joe naturally turned for help.

He sat down by old Gabelle, who was superintending the cookery of a pot full of soup, and asked him in a low tone:

"Old Gabelle did not turn Mormon too?"

Old Gabelle did not turn his head, but kept on stirring the pot, and whispered, under his breath:

"*Chut! Chut! tait*. Dey listen, all de time. No, I vill not be a cannibal in his new religion. What do I do? We are far away from de forts, and de Scotts are too many. We must go dere, and do as we are made to do, or get killed."

"But you told me you did that too?" asked Joe.

Gabelle shrugged his shoulders.

"Dey do not care to tell me mosh. But dat man de Scotts, he tell me. He vill keep my secret, dat get in his way. Did you not know it? He look as if he have no gun all de time; but he carry de pistol under his black coat, and be gif von to Scott. *Gurs a foi!* Take care!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A PROPOSAL IN FORM.

The revelations of the Frenchman made Joe very uncomfortable, as he thought over them. He was all alone, as far as he himself was concerned; and he had made up his mind to escape, but the fact that the poor Frenchman was in the same pickle, with his good-natured wife and all the children, made Joe pause, before he thought of going away from them. He had had confidence that he could get off himself, at night, and probably find the fort, which he knew existed some hundred miles back on the trail, by travelling at night, when the Indians were not likely to follow him.

But to do so, would be to leave the children to the mercy of the Indians, hovering round the caravan, and he had no doubt that the Frenchman, the caravan of the deacon to doubt that, if Joe left the caravan, the fate of its members would be hastened, whatever it was.

Joe had not been spared so long for his sake, and what was the reason, he could not yet tell; but the way the deacon had spoken to him was kind, if not entreating, and there was some reason for the tone he had adopted.

Thinking over all these things, Joe whispered to Gabelle:

"Would ye dare to run?"

The Frenchman shuddered.

"No, *mon Dieu*, no. Dey would catch us. Did you not hear of *de Angels*?"

This was the second time Joe had heard the words, and he said:

"Yes, Jim told me of 'em but I never heard of 'em before. What do you know?"

Gabelle looked round timidly. The Scotts were at work at their supper, and no one was looking that way.

"I tell you," he said, quickly, under his breath, "de deacon know de are; but dey keel all de domans de Prophet tell dem. Dey are on de track all de time, and no man can't ven dey come."

"Are they Injuns?" asked Joe.

"I do not know, but I know, dat de deacon, as he call himself, is de 'captain de de host,' as dey call it. Oh, *mon Dieu*, dat ye nevair have seen him. It was a had day, and he vill nevair leave us, if de domans is vome in de party."

Joe looked over at the other wagons.

"Do you mean that those women in there are given up to become Mormons, all of their own free will?" he asked, incredulously.

Gabelle shook his head.

"Dey do not know yet. De deacon he tell de men and women to keep it from de women. Dey vill not know till it is too late, and dey are in de hands of de vat dey call *Angels*. Ah, *mon Dieu*, I call dem *diabes*!"

Joe was now so much more to overcome with the terror of the idea, and shook his head dolorously, as he went on stirring his soup.

Presently the hoarse voice of old Scott came from the first wagon, and Joe said:

"Hello, Gabelle. what air you sayin' to that mau? Don't ye know he's a Gentile, and not one of 'em. You'd best keep your tongue from him. Ef he hear de company he's keepin', he kin git up and gi."

Gabelle shuddered, and answered, in the whining tone of one who fears to offend:

"Monsieur Scott, I was onlce telling him how to

make de good soup, gettin' more, *parde d'honneur*.

Will you had some? It is ready now."

Scott scowled.

"No, don't want none of your darnation French stuff. Give me a venison steak, and you kin have all the other like to make."

Then, to Joe, he hawled, in a tone of indescribable insolence:

"Come over, hyar, Gentile, ef ye want to have supper."

"If ye don't, then git aout of the camp," Joe heard him, and the young fellow's blood boiled at the tone adopted. It was the first time that the Scotts had been so insulted by one of the host.

But the very insults, passed on Joe, made him all the more careful that he should not put himself into the power of his enemies, as the Scotts and the deacon now undoubtedly were.

Affecting to laugh at the tone of Scott, he rose, and came over to the fire, saying:

"Why, sartainly, ef you want me to take grub with ye. Remember that I took my fist at your eye, and on the Kansas trail, allers villin' to eat my share. But why in the dickens didn't ye tell me ye was goin' to turn Mormons? I ain't got the least objections to doin' the same myself."

But the very words, which seemed to be an instant change in the looks of the whole family of Scotts, for the old man growled in a mollified way:

"Oh, well, ef that's the way ye talk, I ain't got, no objections to doin' the same. But ye got to pass the object, the same as the rest of us, ye know."

"The what?" asked Joe, puzzled.

"What they call the *object* de trial, ye know. I dunno, but the deacon says so."

Joe looked at the deacon, and saw how it was as how it's a terrible thing, and any man that goes through it, won't never go back on the church."

Said Scott, who, in his ignorance, wished to explain the scripture phrases by which the deacon had pictured the initiation of the Mormon neophytes. "You see, the deacon ye was ready to 'tine, and he'd had told ye."

Here Joe, whose husky brain had been working at a scheme by which he hoped to get out of the toils he was in, said:

"And haow dy'e know he didn't, Scott? I've ben foolin' ye all this time to find ef ye was a reel Saint or not. I've been talkin' to the deacon jest as you come up, and he don't know ye don't know ye don't grist in Injuns in the wood over yonner, where he went in. He give me the road fur the next week, and told me haow to find the pass whar we're gwine to see Deseret. Naow, after this, I want ye to understand one thing, Mr. Scott, and dat ain't two. I'm the guide of this outfit, and ef you don't be have civil like, *I'll leave ye*, to take keer of yerselves in the wilderness, and git out of the way of them Injuns as best ye kin."

His news produced an immediate effect on the Scotts, who had begun to think, in the religious delusion, that the deacon was a true prophet, by the wiles of the Mormon apostle in disguise, that they were able to take care of themselves in the wilderness.

"Oh, good Lord! Injuns! Ye don't mean that, really, Joe, do ye?" asked the father, with a shaking voice.

"I do mean it, and ef ye doubt it, all ye've got to do is to go over to that wood, over yonner, and ye kin see fur yerselves," replied Joe, tranquilly.

"I ain't partick'ler, myself, as to haow I'm killed; but the deacon Injuns roasts all that's in the camp, and I'm git up and git as soon as ye like, Mr. Scott, and you kin take keer of the gals, as ye'll, a full-fledged Saint naow, and I'm only a *Gentile*."

The news of the deacon of Indians had changed the spirits of the Tennesseans considerably. They had had no intimation of such a thing from the deacon, though he had told them often that his church exercised a great control over the tribes in the vicinity of Deseret.

He had been present when they, would have relied on him entirely to protect them; but he had left them, and now he was the only person who knew what had become of him.

So old Scott changed his tune at once, and said: "I tell you naow, Joe, that you talked ag'in the church, and de deacon, ye see."

"Then, arter this, ye'd best leave them alone that knows more'n you do, or mebbe you'll git into the hands of the deacon, and he'll make you a witness of your own virtuous indignation."

"I'll have you know, Mr. Scott, that the deacon told me as haow he wanted me fur suitin', and it's my opinion he wants to make one of 'em. I'll have you know, I'll be a while ago; and ef ever I git that, you'd best look aout haow you talk to me. *You hyar*!"

And Scott was so subdued by the rating he'd got, and the deacon was so much more to him, that he only reply him a meek "All right," and went at his supper, while the young hunter went back to the fire of the Gabelle, and staid there, all the rest of the night.

He noticed that, while he was speaking to the father of the Scott family, the women had been listening to the quarrel, and that they had the look of people who were looking something new to them.

What they knew, if anything, of the purposes of their lords and masters, in taking them to the Mormon settlement, he did not yet know; but he had an idea that the deacon was kindly to the new dispensation as did the men.

Women, however, are apt to have, a slight prejudice against a principle of life, and never the Scott women were an exception to the rule.

He sat at supper with the Frenchman, who seemed to be pleased at the way he had taken down the insolence of the ignorant crackers in the other camp,

and was talking idle of nothing at all, to distract his attention from brooding over his troubles, when one of the Scott girls—the best looking of the two, named Lucinda—came over to the fire, and asked him:

"Say, Joe, what's this we hyar about Mormons? I want you to understand that we're jest as good as you air, ef you ain't a Saint, and that we don't want no one to interfere fur us. It's the will of the Lord to seal us to the captain of the host, we're jest gwine to be *sealed*, and tain't none of your business. Thar!"

There was another mystery to Joe, who had never heard the word "seal," used in the Mormon connection before. And moreover he had been rather sweet on Lucinda herself at times, and the tone of the girl's remark.

"Why, Miss Lucindy," he said, looking up, "I didn't go to say nothin' disrespectful to you, of all people in the world. I want dat you'd allers be *sealed*, and I want you to *seal* ye, *allers*, ef ye welcome, I'm sure."

Lucindy seemed to be slightly mollified by this speech; for there was a tone of coquetry in her voice as she said:

"In coorse, ef there was *any one else* more like what me and sis thought we'd *prefer*, we'd *hes a* choice. The deacon he's a good man, and he's got 'fine the Saints, and go through the *object*, the same as the rest of us."

Here was an advance with a vengeance, but Joe did not know what she meant, in his ignorance of the Mormon jargon.

"Waal, Miss Lucindy," he said peaceably, "I ain't got nother to say ag'in the sealin'." Ef you want me to get sealed, I'll tell you, I'll do it."

Miss Lucindy looked slightly as she arranged the strings of her sun-honnet.

"I dunno, but I know that much, Mr. Joe; but ef you was villin' to take good keer of us, and promise we shouldn't be parted, me and sis, we kinder thought it might be a good arrangement. Ye see the deacon he's a good man, and he's got 'fine the ye call *coor kind*, and then say he's got more'n he kin attend to, and he ain't over anxious to get sealed to no more, jest naow, so he says; and, ef ye're agreeable, I'll tell Mr. and Mrs. Scott the seal-in' done, as soon as we git to Deseret."

Joe, still innocent of what she meant and in the supposition that the "sealing" was some religious ceremony, which he had made up his mind to do, and hear, till he could get a chance to escape, merely said:

"Very well, Miss Lucindy, then that's settled."

And with that he turned to his faithful pipe, without which he never was happy, even at that early date, and began to fill it, while Miss Lucindy went on to the fire of her own camp, and he saw her talking to Martha, while the expression of the whole family altered for the better toward him.

But the stars were out by this time, and California Joe saw that he could not stay in the camp, if he decided there was any use in watching, when he knew the camp was in the power of the Indians at any time they chose to come out on the occupants.

He remembered that he had made up his mind from the fires, to a place where it would be sheltered from the light, and he could keep a watch on the wood where he had seen the Indian.

For a long time the quietude and suspense kept him awake, but at last nature triumphed, and he slept soundly, not to wake till the rising sun warned him it was time to break up the camp, safe as yet.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE FIRST INDIANS.

A WEEK had passed since the night when Joe and the Scott caravan went into camp in the Middle Park, and the little trio of wagons had halted again, a hundred and twenty miles further on, by the banks of a stream of which no one knew the name, at the foot of a range of mountains which ran from west to east.

They were on the south side of this range, and had come to a place where the range ran in a range, that came in from the north, and formed an angle, at which a pass existed, marked by a curious cliff like, like a saddle, as the deacon had told Joe when he had been on the trail.

No Indians had been seen on the road, since the time when Joe had seen the warrior come out to show himself; but the young hunter, green as he had been, had become convinced that the camp was being followed and watched by some one, though the thick-witted Tennesseans had no idea of the fact, and were congratulating themselves that the deacon had saved them from the Indians.

But Joe, "instructed" as he was in prairie lore, had a good head and a good pair of eyes, and had not left "so opportunities unimproved, while he had been on the trail from Kansas."

He had learned to distinguish the track of a ridden horse from one that was running wild, and had noticed many tracks, on the trail, as he rode ahead of the wagons, which he thought must come from Indians.

He had already found out that wild horses, of which there were several, did not come out of the habit of roaming along at a walk, in an irregular mass, frequently stopping to feed, while ridden horses were apt to go in files, and at a faster pace, than the wild ones.

Joe had also noticed that the hair of the mane of a wild horse had come on a feather, dyed of a different color from nature, and knew that it could only have come from the head-dress of an Indian.

He saw, however, that he might be, did not seem to have taken any trouble to hide their signs, and Joe concluded that they traveled in this careless way, on purpose to let him know that they were around.



That the deacon exercised control over them in some way was plain, but what was the nature of the influence he could not yet tell. He was brought the train to a halt by the stream, he hoped that the suspense would be ended by the appearance of the deacon, who had promised to meet him there.

During the journey thither he had many conversations with the Scotts, and had learned from them much of what the deacon had said of the influence of the Mormon religion, so far as their ignorant minds could explain it to the young man.

He had heard all about the miraculous discovery of a book of Mormon by the first Pioneers, and the cruel persecutions to which the early converts of the new faith had been exposed in the various homes to which they successively fled, till they had attained the wilderness, where no man could disturb them.

He found that the only doubter in the camp, in the Scott family, was the mother of the whole tribe, being an old woman and set in her ways, who could not yet see the propriety of her husband taking to himself another wife, if he pleased. Her husband, on the contrary, was full of the patriarchal authority in favor of the institution of polygamy, and talked with an unctious that would have done credit to a better educated man, of the advantages that would flow from such a union.

He kept his mouth shut as to argument, and listened to all that was said; for he had determined to deceive those who had deceived him, and his quick wit told him that he could do so, and that for him to know the ground he was to traverse.

He found out the meaning of the word which had puzzled him so much, as to being "sealed," and appreciated the truth of the words which he had heard of the would join the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

In this frame of mind he saw the camp pitched by the stream, and wandered off to find some game for supper, for there was not much visible during the last day's march.

The face of the country had changed, and the grass was scanty, with patches of sterile sandy ground, as the old woman said, "mountains, that fore-shadowed the desert to come."

The only animals seen during the day had been the large sage hares, that fed on the sage grass, the only vegetation to be seen, and the water had been growing steadily worse and worse all through the journey, on account of the strong alkaline nature of the soil.

The river to which they had come was the first indication of the life, and the animals of the caravan had drank it greedily.

Joe went off toward the foot-hills, where he saw some timber at the mouth of a ravine, and before he got within a quarter of a mile of the place, saw several black-tailed deer come out at a gallop, frightened by the sight of his horse, when they stopped to stare.

It was an advantage in the fact that to get to the open plain they would be compelled to pass him, and the animals seemed to realize the same fact, for they were all attracted to him, and he saw a black-tail before, and the beauty of the animals astonished him.

For a few seconds they stood staring at him, and then the leading deer turned and made for the mountains—just too late.

Joe, who had always been a quick shot, had taken a sight at the animal as it stood for that fatal moment, and he had the satisfaction of seeing drop in its tracks, in the act of turning, when the rest of the herd vanished.

Joe went up to the carcass and had begun to cut it, when he saw a mule, that had become the best of all guards to him, uttered a frightened snort and began to tug at the lariar by which he had fastened it to the horns of the deer which he was skinning.

Joe had become so accustomed to relying on the senses of a animal that he immediately rose and took his rifle, while he made good ground.

He saw nothing, but the mule continued to snort and snuff the air, staring wildly in a direction which Joe, following, ascertained the cause of the animal's terror.

Coming down on him from the windward side, in a ravine of the range, was a party of ten or twelve Indians in full panoply, riding at a walk and in full sight.

They had just turned the angle of a rock when he saw them, and the leader bore a red pennon on the end of his lance.

Joe, for a moment, had an idea of taking flight; but he knew it would be useless, for the Indians had seen him, and his mule was too slow to run from their swift points.

He therefore took his post by his mule and waited for them to come up, which they did with no sign of hurry till they were within a hundred yards, when the young hunter leveled his rifle over the back of his mule, using the animal for a shield, and called out:

"Stop that! No n-ar-er, ef you don't want to git your hides plucked!"

At the first they understood his English or not, the action was one of a kind which a man in any part of the world would have appreciated.

The effect of the gesture was to cause an immediate change of the party, and the leader waved his hand and called out something in a strange tongue, which Joe did not understand, but which he took, from the manner that accompanied it, to mean that the Indian was peacefully inclined.

But Joe was too wary to be deceived by any tokens of peace into letting the Indians get near him, and he struck and had heard when he met an old trapper, near the Kansas, in the earlier portion of the journey, that Indians will always hesi-

tate to charge a man with a full gun, when they will rush on him at once if the rifle be empty.

Joe kept his position, and the Indians seemed to appreciate the strength of his position, for they made no hostile movement, but drew off to a little distance, when the leader rode out alone, having his lance behind him, holding his hand up, with the palm to the front, in the signal of amity of the plains tribes, which even Joe could understand.

The young hunter was puzzled what to do, but he concluded that the Indian wanted to take to him and engage his attention, while the rest would steal in on him.

He allowed him to get within about ten feet, when he leveled the rifle again, and called out: "That'll do! Stop that, Injun!"

And the red-man obeyed the order, with a suddenness that showed he understood English, while he said:

"No shoot, no shoot. Injun want talk."

"Talk away, then, but keep yer distance," said Joe sternly.

The savage seemed at a loss what to say, and his hesitation increased as he tried to make himself understood.

"You white man," he said slowly, "Me friend of Saint—you know Saint—me come—Saint."

"I dunno what ye mean," said Joe obstinately.

"Man—you call—d—acc," said the Indian as plainly as he could.

Joe was a little surprised.

The hunter pronounced the word correctly, but the Indian was still suspicious as to his designs, so he asked him:

"What did he say to you?"

The Indian seemed to be struggling with his ignorance of English, but he managed to get out:

"He say—he come—when—sun—so high."

He pointed to a part of the heaven where the sun, with his lance behind him, about the hour of sunset, would be, when it came to its couch for the night.

"Very well," said Joe curtly. "Then, the sooner you git up and git, the better fur you."

And he pointed to the mule, who so far at the Indian's head, that the savage, who had no weapons but a bow and arrows, neither of which was in hand at the moment, wheeled his horse and galloped away, with every sign of confusion and fear.

Then Joe saw him speak excitedly to his comrades and the next minute they uttered a yell, as if they were angry at the way he had been treated, when the white man, who had been about the hour of sunset, would be, when it came to its couch for the night.

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"Very well," said Joe curtly. "Then, the sooner you git up and git, the better fur you."

And he pointed to the mule, who so far at the Indian's head, that the savage, who had no weapons but a bow and arrows, neither of which was in hand at the moment, wheeled his horse and galloped away, with every sign of confusion and fear.

Then Joe saw him speak excitedly to his comrades and the next minute they uttered a yell, as if they were angry at the way he had been treated, when the white man, who had been about the hour of sunset, would be, when it came to its couch for the night.

long, but attired in a gorgeous habit of scarlet cloth, covered with gold lace, that resembled the gala costume of an Indian chief.

He came galloping up on a magnificent horse, covered with the spots that showed Indian blood, and was followed by a number of horsemen—all white men—who wore wide hats of gray and a sort of uniform, while their belts were loaded with arms, and they had the appearance of being desperate men from the expression of their faces.

No man among them made their appearance, headed by the false deacon, than the Indians, who had been circling round Joe, quitted their little game and drew off, as if well known to the new-comers, while the deacon rode up to Joe, as the hunter stood behind his barricade and called out, in stern tones:

"Young man, what meaneth this? Did not the Canaanite deliver my message?"

Joe stared at him in his new glory, and could not but confess that the Mormon chief looked, now that he had come out in his true character, every inch a man and a warrior.

His long hair was waving under the shade of a broad white hat, in which was set the plume of the brightest blood red, which seemed to be a symbol of authority.

He wore a sort of open jacket of scarlet and gold, with broad, Mexican-shaped trousers of the same color, and a lustrous white shirt, covered with rucks under the jacket.

The gleam of precious stones from the bosom of the shirt showed that the deacon, so sober when among Gentiles, could be as great a dandy as any man, in the midst of his own familiars.

Joe was holding the fort—that is to say, the side of the mountain with the grim expression of a man who has made up his mind to die at his post, and the dauntless young fellow balled the enemy sternly:

"S'op that, ef ye don't want a hole bored in ye. Ye kin kill me, arter; but I'll drop you fust."

And, as the deacon was in full sight and had not even taken the precaution to draw a weapon, the Mormon chief halted.

With an act that was not entirely easy, he cried out to Joe:

"Young man, what meaneth this? Knowest thou that these are the Destroying Angels of the Lord?"

"I dun'no and I don't keer," was the reply, as Joe kept his piece leveled on the deacon. "I know this, that those Injuns wanted to git me; but nuther they nur you don't do it, 'thout a fight. So come on, with all yer damned Angels, ef ye want to git wiped out."

Deacon Simplicity compressed his lips as he looked at the dauntless youth behind the mule. He knew enough of human nature to be aware that, if he went on, Joe would shoot, and he knew that the aim of the young Kentuckian was singularly accurate. Making discretion the better part of valor, he said loudly:

"It is enough. I mean them no harm. It was but to test thy courage, that I sent the Canaanites before me. Thou hast done well. Now come from thy post and surrender to the Lord's forces, or it will be the worse for thee."

Joe shook his head.

"Not by a damned sight, deacon. I've ben fooled too often. How an I to know that, ef I come out, you won't tell them fellers to shoot or hang me on sight? Ef that's got to be did, I want to know it, and hev a little fun fust."

The deacon turned round to his men, and the expression on his face changed to one of stern decision, as he slipped on the sign of his chief.

"Brother, let Gabriel and Uzziel advance, and take that ungodly man from his place."

Two of the Mormons—big, savage-looking men—as soon as they heard the order, put spurs to their horses and were about to ride recklessly in, when Joe leveled his rifle at the deacon and called out:

"Order 'em back, or ye die!"

His tone was so unmistakably that of a resolute man that the deacon saw he meant what he said, and raised his hand, when the two Mormon "Angels" pulled up, with their pistols drawn, their stiff faces frowning at Joe, but obedient to the slight sign of their chief.

Then the deacon called out:

"What is it thou wishest, rash man? Be think thee that, if a hair of my head is hurt, thou and all these will be killed without mercy!"

And betink you," retorted Joe, "that, ef those fellers don't git back, I'll settle your hash fur one. That's talk, ain't it?"

The deacon looked puzzled.

"What does this mean?" he asked. "I tell



chee that we do not mean to hurt thee. What wilt satisfy thee on that point. Young man, if I wished to hurt thee, I could have done it at any time during the journey. Give up thine arms, or it will be the worse for thee."

Joe was staggered by the way the other spoke, for the air of the deacon had all the dignity of one in authority, and his presence was that of a king.

The deacon saw the change in his face, and added, in a kindly tone:

"Thou hast stood the test well, and showed thou hast all the courage I expected in thee. Now show thou canst obey, and it will be well for thee."

Joe b'ystated a moment, and then called out: "Will you tell those fellows to go back out of gunshot and come to me alone, deacon? I'll give in to you, when I wouldn't to a dozen or a hundred."

The deacon nodded and waved his hand, when the whole party of men with him turned their horses and rode away, without exhibiting the slightest impatience or reluctance to obey any order. When they had gone some distance, Joe waved his hand, threw his rifle to one side, and called to the deacon:

"Now then, deacon, come on; and ef it's peace, it's peace; ef not, war he it."

The Mormon chief immediately rode up to him, leaped from his horse, and held out his hand to Joe, saying, as if much pleased:

"Young man, thou hast stood the test well; thou art worthy to join the Angels of the Lord, and ride in the hand of the Destroyer."

Joe took the hand, but without any cordiality, as he answered:

"That's all very well, deacon; but why didn't you tell me you was in the Mormon church? Am I such a darnation fool that ye c'dn't trust me, when ye see them humbuckers of Scotts inter the secrets. Ye hain't treated me squar', sir, and ye know it as well as I do."

The deacon flashed a swift glance over him, and his eye gleamed with a singular expression. He seemed to be taking Joe's individuality in, and counting over just what he was worth.

Then, with a smile, he said:

"Young man, I had a purpose in that, which thou shalt know now. Did I not say to thee that I would meet thee here, and tell thee of the mysteries that thou couldest not understand?"

"Ay, ye did," replied Joe slowly.

The deacon interrupted him eagerly.

"And the time has come. Why did I not tell thee what I told the Scotts? Because thou art different from them. In thee I see the mind and courage that makes the chiefs of our church, while they are but the herd that we drive to and fro, like cattle. I have told them nothing but what they could understand in this land; but to thee, if thou art worthy, what I've committed the secrets of the church, which they will never know. Young man, thou knowest now, who I am; but not all. Thou knowest I am a Mormon, but that is not all. I am chief of the hand of the D-estroying Angels, and if thou hast finished, for so much as the space of a flash of lightning, these my men would have slain thee, as if thou hadst been a wolf. But thou art one of the men that we need; for we are against the world, and the world is against us. Say the words. Wilt thou join the forces of the Lord, or wilt thou die? For that is the choice before thee. Thou art too bold and wise to be lost in the herd of the great congregation, and to let thee go is not safe for any of us. Thy decision?"

He had begun in a pleading way, as if to wheedle the young man into compliance; but he ended by suddenly pointing a pistol at Joe, and putting the question in his own tone.

And, for the first time in his life, Joe found himself looking down the muzzle of a pistol, while his own rifle was resting with the butt on the ground, not in condition to be used before the deacon could shoot him.

The young man curled his lip, and simply said:

"Shoot, and be darned to ye, then."

For a moment it seemed as if the deacon was about to take him at his word; for his face darkened. Then he suddenly put up the pistol, and said to Joe:

"It is the last test, and thou hast stood it. Give thy decision now, without fear. Wilt thou join the Saints of the Lord, or not?"

The moment the other assumed that tone, the heart of Joe melted within him, and he said, in his frankest tones:

"Deacon, you're a man, and I'd made up my mind to do what ye wanted me; but I warn't to be to the skered into it. I'll fine yer church ef ye want me, and ef ye want me to

ride with ye, I'll be proud to do it, and I'll ride the ways of the plains."

The deacon nodded as if he were highly pleased, and took the hand of the young man in his own.

"Young man," he said, "thou hast decided wisely, and great shall be thy reward. Thou shalt be a prince among men, and thy children shall call thee blessed. The die is cast. I welcome thee to the church of the Latter Day Saints."

So saying, he turned and made a signal to the Mormons, who had halted at a little distance, and they immediately set up a yell and came tearing down at full speed, firing their pistols over the heads of the deacon and Joe, so that the bullets flew in alarming proximity to the pair.

"Fear not," said the Mormon chief calmly, as Joe frowned slightly, suspecting treachery. "This but another test. Thou shalt not be hurt, if thou shouest no fear."

He left Joe as he spoke, and the Destroying Angels swept down on the young hunter like a horde of hungry wolves, with a ferocity that would have shaken the nerve of most men.

As soon as the deacon had got out of the line of their fire, they dashed down on Joe, and fired shot after shot at him, so close that his hat was knocked off, and he expected every moment to feel the sting of the next bullet on his body.

There were at least a hundred of them, and they seemed to be all good shots, from the way they fired at him, circling just as the Indians had done before them.

Then the coil of a lasso was thrown over his head, and he was jerked off his feet, the noose wrapped round him, pinioning his arms close to his sides; in which condition two men caught him by the leg, half stunned by the shock, and before he had an idea of what was going to be done, had clapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, and cast a rope round his ankles, till he was as helpless as a trussed turkey.

Then they swung him up on a horse, before one of the number, and he was carried off full speed, not knowing where he was going.

Before the horses had gone a dozen steps, the voice of the deacon was heard crying:

#### CHAPTER XI.

##### THE INITIATION.

"PUT out the eyes of the accursed one," cried the voice of the Mormon chief; and with the word, several strong hands clutched the helpless Joe, and he was suspended between two horses, when a lance-pole or something of the sort was thrust between his elbows and body, and he was left hanging there, in a way that hurt him considerably, and left him more helpless than before. Then some one rode up behind him, and before he had an idea of what was going to be done, had clapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists, and cast a rope round his ankles, till he was as helpless as a trussed turkey.

The pace of the Destroying Angels now became furious, and the way in which Joe was slung in the air between two horses was so painful that he had much ado not to shriek with the torture; but he set his teeth hard, with all the resolution of a man who has been stifled every cry, till the agony overcame his senses, and he fainted away, only dimly conscious of the fact that he was being jostled to and fro unmercifully.

At last came a halt, and he woke up to find himself lying on the ground on his face, the pole on his back, and his legs in a helpless, while a confused sound of voices round him showed that the men were holding some sort of a consultation above him.

Then the voice of Deacon Simplicity Fox said:

"Open his eyes, that he may see." With that some one came to the poor fellow where he lay, and withdrew the pole from behind his elbows, when he was rolled over on his back, and the cap was pulled off his face.

For a moment, the change, from darkness to comparative light, blinded Joe, but the sun had set, and the twilight only lingered on the tops of the mountains behind him, so that he was soon able to see clearly around.

He found himself in a narrow ravine, while the Mormons were lighting fires round him.

They had dismounted from their horses, and were engaged at the various occupations of making camp, while the deacon and a group of three or four men, who wore red plumes in their hats, were directing the operations.

Joe felt stiff and sore after his ride, and his strength seemed to be taken from him for the time, while the Mormons took not the smallest notice of him, as he lay.

Among the rest he did not fail to see the Indians who had first assaulted him in a camp apart from the rest, with their horses picketed in a green spot, while the warriors were seated on the grass, eating dried corn, which they took from their little sacks, carried on a march.

In spite of his cramped and painful position, Joe could not help feeling a great interest in what he saw, for it was his first opportunity of seeing with his own eyes the scenes of which he had dreamed when he first came on the plains.

He had had a great ambition to be a scout and warrior, and to find out the ways of the Indians, and here they were, right before his eyes, in a place where he had an opportunity to see what they did, without their suspecting his object.

He had a good opportunity to look round him, and saw that the camp of the "Angels" and their Indian allies was secured from assault by a line of sentries, whom he could see dimly outlined in the twilight. The guards were pacing to and fro at the other end of the ravine in which the camp was laid out, and the rest of the men worked as if they felt perfectly secure.

He watched the Destroying Angels closely, for there was no one to hinder him.

He saw that they seemed to have picked men for height and size, averaging six feet, and all of them powerfully built.

They were armed to the teeth, every man having a pair of revolvers in his belt, and a rifle of a kind that Joe had never seen before. It was the type of Sharp's variety, and the young man had heard of its marvelous efficacy, but had never seen a specimen.

Its superiority to his own weapon was illustrated to him by chance, as one of the men near him opened the breech of the rifle and drew the charge, which he put into the pouch at his belt in a way that Joe had never seen before, while he took out the breech apparatus and oiled it carefully, when he reloaded the weapon in two seconds, and remarked to one of his friends in Joe's hearing:

"Reckin the Canaanites won't hev much chance at us after this, brother Uzziel."

He spoke to a tall man, with long red hair, that flowed down over his shoulders like the mane of a lion, on either side of a bearded face of severe gravity.

Brother Uzziel replied with a frown:

"The Canaanites are not the foes of whom the Lord speaks. 'Tis the Gentiles that are coming nearer all the time, that we have to sweep with the besom of the Lord. Verily the time is nigh at hand."

Joe did not yet understand the figurative language adopted by the Mormons; but he saw that his captors were uneasy, afraid that his person was a matter of small importance to them, compared with something else that was going on near them.

What that could be he knew not, but he trusted to the operation of time to tell him, and tried to make the best of his uncomfortable position by staring round him, and taking things as they came. For some time more passed in this way, the camp of the Mormons quieted down, and the men were gathered round their fires, eating their suppers, which seemed to be as frugal as those of the Indians, though the chiefs—as Joe took the men with the red plumes in their hats to be—ate venison steaks, which were broiled on the coals of a fire, and the men, and brought to them with every demonstration of respect.

In fact, the discipline of the hand of "Angels" seemed to be of the most slavish kind; for the rough warriors, bristling with arms, served their chiefs on bended knees, with bared heads, and obeyed the slightest gesture with an eagerness that would have been ludicrous, had it not been so evidently inspired by awe.

At last the supper was over, and no one had come near Joe, when the deacon turned his head, as he sat within hearing of the young prisoner, and said audibly:

"Bring the Gentile before us, that he may be questioned."

Two stalwart Mormons immediately strode toward Joe and lifted him to his feet, when one of them stooped and cut the cord that bound his ankles and said roughly:

"Arise and walk, you want man. The chief requires thee to answer for what thou hast done."

Then he was helped forward to the fire, around which the chiefs were seated, and left



there, hardly able to stand, for the stiffness and pain in his limbs.

Then the Mormon chief raised his eyes; the chiefs who were with him did the same, and stared at Joe with a steady, unwinning gaze that awed the prisoner.

Joe tried to brave it out, but his eyes sunk, in spite of himself, before the gaze which he met; at which the Mormon leader smiled slightly, and broke the silence, which was becoming oppressive, by saying:

"Well, Gentle, what hast thou to say?"

The other chiefs said not a word, and Joe's guards stood silently by, with their hands on his elbows to support him, in case he should fall.

The young hunter flushed as he answered, in a voice that trembled in spite of himself:

"What 'ye want me to say, sir?"

"Tell us what was thine intention in coming to this place, sacred to the Saints of the Lord; and thou but an unclean Gentile?" asked the other slowly.

Joe threw back his head,

"Why did I come! That's a queer question for you to ask, deacon, when you was the man who gave me the route, and told me how to come. I come 'cause you told me."

"And in so doing, thou hast done well. But I ask thee again, why didst thou come at all to the plains?"

"To make my fortune, if I could," replied Joe. The deacon nodded his head slowly.

"It is well. But now thou knowest that this is the Lord's land, and that we are the Saints of the Lord, what is thy wish?"

Joe hesitated a moment. He knew that there was some test in the apparently fair question; and he answered, in the spirit he had resolved to show:

"I want to fine your crowd, ef y'all let me, deacon. It seems to be a pretty good one."

The deacon frowned, and the chiefs did the same, as the leader said, in his sternest tones:

"Young man, thou knowest not what thou sayest. Dost thou know what it is to join the army of the Lord, and to do the acts that we do?"

"No, I don't," said Joe, boldly; "but I bain't see'd the men fight in your crowd, that I couldn't tackle, and I ain't afraid but what I c'd hold my own with the best of 'em."

His answer seemed to please the deacon and the men who were with him, for their faces softened somewhat.

Fox inclined his head.

"If that is thy spirit, it may yet be well. But knowest thou the vow that these men are obliged to take on them, to become the Destroying Angels of the Lord?"

"No, I don't," said Joe.

"They swear to obey *all* orders, coming from the captain of the Lord's army, and his officers, no matter if to do so is to kill the man who obeys the order. Canst thou take that vow on thyself?"

"I kin," said Joe stoutly, with the mental reservation that he would keep it if it pleased him.

"Release him," said the deacon.

In a moment the two guards of Joe had undone the handcuffs from his wrists, and he stood a free man, but unarmed, in the midst of the "Destroying Angels." Then the deacon made a signal of his hand, and the men, who had been furtively watching the scene by the light of the fire, rose and made a great circle round the young man, while the deacon and the chiefs rose and turned to the circle.

"Angels of the Lord's host," said the Mormon chief in a solemn tone, "ye behold before ye a Gentile. What is the doom of a Gentile when he cometh on the land of the Saints of the Lord?"

"Death!" was the answer, in a deep tone, in chorus, delivered by the whole circle.

Even Joe, brave as he was, could not help a slight shudder, which he instantly suppressed, as he heard the stern answer.

"It is well," said the chief; "but when the wicked man cometh from his wickedness that he hath committed, and believeth the word of the Lord, delivered to the Prophet Mormon, what should he do to him then?"

"Test him," was the answer, delivered in the same chorus as before, and the eyes of every man in the circle were fixed on Joe, while the circle of guards was plainly audible.

"He shall be tested," said the deacon, slowly and solemnly. Then he turned to Joe, and continued:

"Dost thou believe the word of the Lord, delivered to the Prophet Mormon, and Joseph Smith, the Martyr of the Lord?"

Joe, who had determined to go through the

whole performance without exhibiting any doubt, was shrewd enough to answer:

"I believe all ye tell me, deacon. I ain't the man to go back on what I've said."

"Art thou willing to enter the army of the Lord, and fight manfully in his battles?" asked the chief, in the same solemn way.

"That's what I come to do," said Joe.

"Then thou art willing to take the oath?" the Mormon asked.

"I am," said Joe; but this time not without a slight quiver in his voice, for he knew not what he might be called on to swear.

The chief, the deacon, and the prisoner repeat after him an oath of the most tremendous character, in which the man who took it was obliged to call down on himself the vengeance of heaven, in this world and the next, if ever he disobeyed the order of the captain of the Lord's host or any of his officers. Even Joe, bold as he was, shuddered as the oath was repeated, and the circle of Mormon "Destroyers" round him at every sentence uttered a solemn "Amen," and repeated the formula "*Damned be the traitor to time and eternity*," with a ghastly earnestness that left no doubt of their sincerity.

When at last the oath was over the chief gave the hand to Joe and asked him the final question:

"Brother Destroyer, is there any doubt in thy heart that thou wilt keep what thou hast sworn to?"

"No," responded Joe stoutly, for he felt that his life depended on his going through everything thick and thin.

The chief turned to a man near him.

"Arm the recruit," he said.

The tall man with red hair whom Joe had heard called "Brother Uzziel," came forward and handed Joe a revolver at once.

Then the chief said to the recruit:

"Brother Joseph, thou art now one of the Lord's host and bound to obey all orders. Cock that pistol."

Joe did as he was bid.

"Place it to thy head and slay thyself and great shall be thy reward in the next world," said the deacon quietly. "The army of the Lord hath need of thy death; therefore *slay thyself*."

Joe hesitated for one instant, and then, with the words of the deacon, that the test was not one that would hurt him, "*if he only showed no fear*," he did as he was bid, and pulled the trigger.

The flash burned his thick hair and the shock of the weapon stunned him so that he nearly fell; but, the next minute a wild yell of approval rung out from the throats of the Destroying Angels, and Joe was surrounded and caught up in the strong arms of a dozen men who lifted him aloft in triumph, while the clear voice of the chief was heard above the tumult, crying aloud:

"Great is the mercy of the Lord, and he has accepted his servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And California Joe realized that his ordeal was over, and that he was accepted into the ranks of the terrible Mormon band, of which, at that early date, nothing or next to nothing, was known by the world, outside Deseret.

He had passed all the tests, had shown that he had the unflinching nerve required by the fanatic successors of Joseph Smith, and from that moment he was first in the list of the Destroying Angels recognized him one of themselves.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE WAGON-TRAIN.

The rest of the night was passed by the Destroying Angels in quiet in the shelter of the ravine, and Joe found himself treated with honor, in spite of his new arrival in the band.

The chief, whose Mormon name he now learned was Nephi, took him apart from the rest to his own fire, and gave him a long series of instructions in his new faith, in which the point to be first and most insisted on was the absolute necessity of *passive obedience*, in a member of the band, to all orders, rather than any tenets of faith, which, as Nephi told him, could be learned at any time, when he had opportunity to read the Book of Mormon through and be taught by the priests what concerned his soul's salvation.

This was a relief to Joe, who had been afraid that he would be compelled to learn long texts, which, as he was but a poor scholar, would cost him more trouble than anything else.

After the lesson had been delivered, the deacon—as Joe continued to call him at times. From want of ability to remember his true title—

gave the new recruit a set of arms, similar to those in the hands of the rest of the band, and told him to prove them, the next day, for he might have need of them.

With this he dismissed the new recruit to sleep, and Joe, who had suffered much fatigue and pain since his capture, was glad to seek repose, which was not disturbed till the rays of the morning light shone in at the entrance of the ravine, showing that it faced the east.

Then the whole band rose, with a silence and quiet discipline very different from anything Joe had yet seen, when breakfast was hastily prepared, and the chief gave the order to depart.

Joe found that his faithful mule had been brought along with the train, and he was glad to see his old companion again, for he had feared she would be left behind, as too slow.

But, now that the morning was come, he saw that a good many of the Destroying Angels rode mules instead of horses, though the chief himself had as handsome a steed as he had ever seen in all his life.

The band arose before the sun had risen, and the chief mustered them in a line, when he said:

"Brethren of the Lord's host, to-day is the day of the vengeance of the Saints. The man that speaks a word, till he is hidden, to-day, will be put to death. Follow me."

With that he rode out of the ravine up into a cleft of the mountain, and Joe, who was naturally very loquacious, followed in the ranks with the rest, in the midst of the most oppressive heat the vengeance of the Saints. The grim "Angels" rode on with their eyes fixed on their horses' ears, while the Indians, who had the advance and seemed to be employed as flankers and scouts, rode ahead, and the cavalcade entered a maze of ravines and steep ascents, from which they did not emerge till midday, when they came out on the other side of the range, and saw below them a beautiful green vale with a running stream that ran through the midst of it, by which a wagon-train, consisting of forty or fifty wagons, was camped, the white tilts of the vehicles arranged in the universal "corral," that is formed at every encampment.

As the Mormon leader saw the sight, he stopped his horse and pointed to the wagons below, with the stern remark, to the man who rode next to him in the leading file:

"Brother Uzziel, the Lord hath delivered them into our hands."

Then Joe began to realize what he had not done before, that there was more work to do, and that he, the new recruit, was expected to take part in it.

The train below was evidently inimical to the Mormons in some way, and was to be destroyed.

Who were they, these strangers, and what were they doing there?

He had no time to think over this, or what he should do, for the Mormon leader waved his hand, and the whole band set off down the descent to the valley at a slow trot.

The Indians seemed to have vanished in the earth at first, but as the Destroying Angels rode on, Joe caught sight of the plumes of the savages at the side of a thicket, where they were sheltered from view of the emigrants in the train, awaiting the coming of their white allies before the work of destruction.

But the coming of the white men was not disputed in any way, and the emigrants caught sight of them at once, and could be seen running to and fro in camp, as if preparing for them as they came, while the fluttering robes of women and children were plainly visible as they clustered in groups at the edge of the camp to look at the gayly-attired horsemen.

The descent to the valley was not long, and the column of over a hundred men debouched in the green plain, in full sight of the wagons, at less than a hundred yards from the main party of horsemen rode out of the camp, and came at a gallop toward the "Destroying Angels."

The Mormon leader turned to his men, to say, in his stern tones:

"Not a word from the ranks. The Lord will give me the words to say to these Gentiles. Hold ye your peace."

Joe, intensely excited now that the crisis was coming, yet congratulating himself that he was within a few furlongs of the leader, for he could hear all that went on.

He kept silent, and watched. The men from the camp were only about five or six in number, and they passed the thicket in



which the Indians were concealed, without seeing the latter, to all appearance.

The wily savages hid themselves as the riders advanced and came into pistol-shot of the Mormons, when the emigrants halted, as if uncertain what to do, and one of them rode on alone crying out as he came:

"Who are you, gentlemen, and what do you want?"

Nephi called out the answer:

"We are Saints of the Lord, and we are on our land. What do ye here?"

The leader of the emigrants seemed puzzled by the reply, for he called back:

"We want only a free passage, and no more. If you are Mormons, we are your friends, and wish you no harm."

"Come on then, and ride with me," was the stern reply of the chief. "If it be the will of the Lord that ye shall all turn to the faith, it shall be well with ye. If not, not."

The stranger seemed to be puzzled by the language of the Mormon leader, for he allowed the deacon, who had been riding on all the time, to take and close up to him, when Nephi grimly remarked:

"Ride by me, friend, if thou valuest thy life."

As he spoke, he made an imperceptible signal with his hand, and Joe felt his next neighbor in the ranks nudge him.

Joe saw that way, he saw that all the "Angels" had drawn their revolvers, and were riding with them down by their sides.

Understanding the signal that he must do the same, the young hunter drew his pistol and rode on, with his heart beating wildly.

He saw that something terrible was about to happen, and he could do nothing to help the poor creatures, who were to be murdered, as he felt sure, from the expression of the chief's face, set in its sternest frown.

The troop of Mormons rode on at the same slow pace, taking the unhappy man who had come to meet them along with them; and, as they came up to the rest, they motioned them into the ranks with silent gestures with their pistols, that proved efficacious as words.

One by one, the strangers fell into the ranks, and rode there, pale and frightened; it was evident that they had been taken by surprise, by the coming of the Destroying Angels.

As they came nearer to the camp the men who had been running to the defense of the wagons seemed resolved to shoot, and the Mormon chief said sternly to the young man who had come to meet him:

"Friend, ride forward, and tell those madmen that, if a shot is fired, every head in this camp shall be laid low in the dust; but, if they give up their arms, they shall be saved. This land is the Lord's and we are his people; but we do not desire to slay any man who will serve the Lord."

The frightened man who had come there, pale and trembling, immediately rode off, as hard as he could, to the camp, while the Mormons continued their measured and slow advance, with the object of producing the greatest moral effect by their imposing appearance.

Joe heard the envoy shouting out something in the camp, and a great confusion reigned there for the space of about three minutes, during which the Mormons continued to advance.

Then they saw him coming forward again at full gallop, and as soon as he was near enough to be heard, he called out:

"Friends, these gentlemen, promise not to hurt the women and children, and we will surrender."

The Mormon chief put up his hand, and the whole column halted as if by magic.

Then he said slowly:

"Go back to thy people, and tell them that if they will send up their arms, and pile them on the meadow, in front, my young men shall not hurt them. But if it be not done in the space of five minutes, not one man, woman or child shall be left alive to tell the tale that ye entered our territory without our leave."

The wagon-master of the train—for such he was—immediately dashed off, and the Mormons halted and waited sternly, the chief drawing his watch in an ostentatious way, that the men in camp might see it, while he waited for the quiet surrender of nearly sixty armed men.

Joe, with his heart in his mouth, wished that they would defend themselves, for he knew that if they did so they would have a fair chance of selling their lives dearly, and he had a notion that he himself might be able to help them, in the confusion that was sure to ensue.

But, to his incredulous amazement and scorn,

before the five minutes had expired, the wagon-master came out from the camp, followed by a number of men on foot, and they threw their arms down before the Mormon chief, who sat on his horse, with a cold and severe air, as if they were his slaves and he their master.

As soon as this had been accomplished, Nephi beckoned to the wagon-master, who advanced, his face very pale, and took off his hat humbly.

"Look me in the face, man, and if thou liest it will be to thy shame, for the Mormon chief said, in his most distinct tones: 'Are these all the arms of thy men, or hast thou hidden any?'"

"So help me God, sir, they are all we have," was the trembling response, "and we claim your mercy. You promised us our lives, and indeed we had no idea that you, Mormon gentlemen had any objection to peaceable emigrants crossing your territory, to find a short cut to the mines."

Nephi frowned at him.

"Who thou dost to speak, when thou wert not 'hidden'?" he asked sternly. "Now, by the soul of the Prophet Mormon, I swear, that I will not eat or drink, this day, till thou and all thy men have become as we are, and the women are sealed to my followers. Ye have come to our territory uninvited, and have stolen our goods. Are ye willing to join the church of the Saints, and give up all your goods to the bishop?"

The wagon-master hesitated, and his face grew ghastly, as he faltered:

"Why, you would not force us to change our religion; would you, sir? We are at your mercy, but you promised that, if we surrendered, we should have fair treatment."

"And so shall ye have!" thundered the Mormon, as he rose in his stirrups and glared at the unhappy wagon-master. "Such justice shall ye have as the children of Israel meted out to the Canaanites, when they took Jericho. To your work, oh Angels of the Lord!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE MASSACRE.

WITH that, and without another moment of warning, he drew a pistol and shot down the wagon-master, before the unhappy man could defend himself or even cry for mercy, while the Destroying Angels, at the signal opened a fusillade on the cowering and unarmed men before them, and charged the camp at full speed, shooting like fiends into the people, who ran from them in all directions, while they watched down like wild beasts by the infuriated Mormons. As for Joe himself, he hesitated for a moment as to what to do, when the stern voice of the chief came to him, like a trumpet-call:

"Strike and spare not; but touch not the women or any female child."

Joe would have said he would have to do as the rest did, or he shot down like a dog; for the hideous fury of the Mormons was fully aroused; so he set off at full speed on his old mule, shooting right and left as he went, but taking care to send all his bullets over the heads of the unhappy fugitives.

He had this in his favor that he was not used to his new rifle and pistols, and had no idea how they shot, so that his misses did not attract attention among the men who surrounded him, while his wild yells were louder than any of them.

But he could do nothing to save any of the men who were slaughtered, and without men he the fierce riders of the Mormon apostle, as they huddled together, realizing, too late, the shameful trick to which they had been subjected. One young man, swift of foot, took to flight and managed to get to the woods before he could be shot down, but the Indians had spied him as they hung about the outskirts of the massacre, and they ran after him into the wood, and soon came out, howling in triumph, bearing the bloody scalp to show they had succeeded.

But the slaughter of the men was not to Joe the worst feature of the whole affair, for it was after the Mormons had entered the camp that his blood ran cold to see what they did.

There, cowering under the wagons, were a number of women and children, and the men dismounted from their horses, rushed into the shrieking groups, and deliberately picked out the worst females, and then the best of three or four years old, whom they slaughtered with as little compunction as if the poor little things had been sheep.

But the noise and bloodshed did not last long, and Joe soon heard the stern voice of the Mor-

mon apostle, crying from the midst of the camp:

"What, ho, brethren! The men are gone that feared not the Lord. Bring forth the women, and let the lots be cast."

Then the young Kentuckian, hardly knowing if he were asleep or awake, saw the women driven, with the few female children that were left after the hideous slaughter he had just witnessed, into the open meadow outside the camp, the Destroying Angels waving their long whips over the heads of the trembling creatures, and not by any means sparing of blows to those that lingered or hesitated.

When a poor mother, who had seen her children killed before her eyes, wept aloud and refused to go forward, the whip was savagely used, till the poor distressed being rushed into the meadow, screaming wildly as she went.

Then the Mormon apostle rode out alone, and called out:

"Let the women be counted."

At the word, a stalwart Mormon came forward and called out to the trembling captives: "Hear, ye women, get in a row, so we kin count ye, this a-way."

He indicated a line in which to march, and they were compelled to move out in file, while the next man counted them, as they passed, in full view of the Mormon chief, to the number of thirty-five women and thirty-seven girl children.

It was a pitiful spectacle to see them, the corpses of their dead fathers, brothers and husbands, covering the ground all round them; but the face of the Mormon leader showed not the slightest sign of pity, or any emotion other than a certain grim satisfaction, and when the count was complete, he said quietly:

"We will cast the lots for choice."

Then he took off his broad hat, and Uzziel came forward and cast in it two little balls, when Nephi cried out:

"Let the brethren advance, and take the lot of the Lord."

The men seemed to know what was coming, for they rode up to the leader at a foot-pace, two by two. Each man, as he passed Nephi, put his hand into the hat, took up a ball, dropped it and rode on, diverging to the right or left.

Joe did not understand what they were doing or what the lot consisted in; but he took his place with the rest, having a companion with him, and happening to be nearly the last man of the file.

When he got to the hat, he saw that the men who had preceded him had divided into two bodies, one of which had gone to the right, the other to the left.

As he neared the apostle, Nephi recognized him, and said, with an approving smile:

"Son Joseph, thou hast done well this day. Take the lot of the Lord. If the ball is white, take thy place on the right hand; if it be black, then go with the men who are waiting for the second choice."

Joe did as he was ordered—lifted the ball, which he could not see in the way Nephi held the hat, and saw that it was white.

Go to the right," said Simplicity Fox, and Joe obeyed.

When he got there, he found a group of about fifty men, and Uzziel said to him, with a grim smile:

"The Lord hath been good to thee to-day, brother, for there are old members of the church that will have to be satisfied with no wife, to-day."

Joe, puzzled at the remark, asked:

"Why, what air we doing?"

"We air choosing our wives, after the manner of the children of Israel, when they spoiled the Canaanites," replied Uzziel, gravely.

There are eighty-five women to a hundred and ten men, and the allies, so that the lot is necessary. The first choice is the next lot; for Nephi hath no love for these things, having ten women sealed to him already."

Then the men who had been left out in the first lot rode out again in pairs, till they had chosen a second company; and each, as he passed in at the gate of the camp, was called aloud by the number he occupied in the line, by one of the Mormon sub-chiefs. Joe found his own number to be forty-nine, and was cautioned to remember it.

Then, when the number of eighty-five had been completed, the chief called out:

"Let the Saints of the Lord advance and choose each one a wife, from the captives of the Lord!"

Then the sub-chief called:

"Number One!"



Out dashed a rather handsome young Mormon, with a wild-looking face and the eager expression of a man who knows he has not long to choose. He rode up to the women and cast his eye over them as he passed along the front, till he set eyes on one who had the appearance of a washerwoman of Irish blood, when he called out:

"Come hither, woman."

The poor woman cowered and faltered; but the man, with a frown, lifted his long whip, and, echoing his first call, made as though he would use the cruel lash.

In a moment she came running to him, shrieking:

"Oh! for God's sake, sir, don't bate! I'll come—indeed I'll come, sir!"

The young savage laughed, as he let out the lash, and took a piece out of the poor woman's shoulder, saying as he did so:

"To then come quickly, or I may change my mind, and give thee to the Indians."

Then he took her to one side, and Joe saw him sitting on his horse, questioning her, as if he were a king and she a slave, while the next man took his choice.

Joe noticed that the second man, after looking over the crowd, selected another big, powerful woman, getting old and wrinkled already, and asked his next neighbor:

"Why do they take such wives as that?"

The Mormon looked at him with surprise, and then smiled as he answered:

"Ah, it is thou, we recruit. When thou hast been as long in the faith as I have, thou wilt learn that the Saints choose their wives, not for looks, but for wear. It will be thy turn after me, and do as thou wilt. Thou wilt choose one of the handsome ones, I doubt not. Well, no one will dispute with thee for that."

Choose we name, we said, after a while, and Joe saw him go out and take the biggest and strongest woman left in the crowd, now that so many had had their pick.

She was a person who looked as if she had been a farmer's wife and used to hard labor all her life, while her flaxen hair and blue eyes were unmistakably German.

Then Joe heard his own number called, and he rode out, not knowing exactly what to do.

The apostle Nephi saw him come, and, smiling, said to him:

"Thou seest that the Saints of the Lord have their rewards on earth, as well as in heaven. Choose well, young man, and take the wife; for the Saints will take care of thee, when we get to Deseret."

Thus adjured, and not knowing what else to do, Joe rode up to the crowd, and, looking over it, was puzzled what to do. Naturally bashful, and confronted by so many women's eyes, the only thing that relieved him was the fact that they all looked pleadingly at him, for they saw that his face was good-natured.

At hapazard he pointed to the middle of the crowd, and called out:

"Hyar, you gal in the blue dress, come hyar. I choose you."

The girl in the blue dress had her back turned to him, and it was only the fact of seeing the patch of color in the midst of other hues, that had decided his choice at all. He had taken an idea that he would try and save one girl and carry her away from the power of the others; and a very beautiful face under a sun-bonnet, with golden curls hanging tangled round the countenance, he did not experience a thrill of pleasure that found vent in a flush, and caused his cynical friend, who had given him such practical advice, to say sardonically:

"Thar, I knowed he'd do it. Ye won't do it arter ye've got sealed to a few more, brother. It's the work they does that makes 'em worth having."

But Joe was deaf to the voice of his experienced friend, and beckoned kindly to the girl in the blue dress who, poor thing, came trembling forward, eyeing him in a frightened way, till she got near his horse, when another Mormon, who was next after Joe came riding by, calling out in a jeering tone:

"Take her away, brother, for we old hands don't want no such gals as that. They don't work fur what they ent."

Joe turned on him fiercely:

"Mind yer own biz and leave the gal alone. I m choosin' her, not you."

The Mormon looked as if he would have made a surly answer; but the voice of Nephi cut short the wrangle, by saying sternly:

"Lemuel, the fault is thine. The recruit is new to our ways, but he has fought well and will fight better when the time comes. Hold thy peace and let her alone."

Lemuel subsided, and Joe said to the girl in an undertone:

"Keep by my horse and don't be skereed. No one sha'n't hurt ye."

The girl looked up at him timidly, as if the kindness of the tone reassured her, and her blue eyes filled with tears as she obeyed him.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### JOE'S CAPTIVE.

THE other Mormons had taken their prisoners away, and the choice was accomplished in peace; when Joe found himself alone, at a distance from the rest, with his strangely-met captive.

Then he spoke quickly to her:

"Gal, don't be afraid. I ain't one of these devils; though they've got me among 'em. I'll help ye to get off, if ye'll trust me. What's yer name?"

She looked up at him in a wild sort of way, as if she did not dare to believe him, and faltered:

"Sir—I— Oh, sir, who are you?"

Joe frowned impatiently, for he knew he had not much time to speak, without exciting the attention of the other Mormons.

"Never mind who I am," he said. "It's you are that I'm askin' ye. What's yer name, and who is yer folks?"

Something in his tone seemed to make her think he meant what he said, for she answered:

"My name is Alice Foster, and my father was one of the good men. Oh, sir, are they going to kill me too?"

"I ain't, little one," he responded kindly. "I ain't goin' to do no sich thing; but air you the gal to stand hardship, if I try to get ye off this very night? Whar air yer other folks, or ain't ye got any?"

"I have an uncle living in San Francisco," she said quickly, seeming to be encouraged again. "I will do what I can, sir, for I am stronger than I look, but what can we do? These men will kill us both, if they find us out." Joe nodded.

"That's true as gospel, little one. But then I don't intend to seek find us out. Not of I know what I'm about, and I think I do. Tell me another thing. Who's got the best hosses in your camp—that is, who had the hosses 'bout could outrun all the rest? Or don't ye know?"

The girl's face brightened up in a moment, as she replied:

"I have a pair of bay horses, that my father owned. I rode one of them, and he kept the other for hunting on the road. If we could get them, they can run faster than anything in the camp. They are thoroughbreds. My father came from Virginia, and they are the best blood of the State, sir."

Joe nodded.

"That's all I wanter know, little one. I'll git aout of this devil's den, afore long, or I'll know the reason why."

Then he went back to the rest of the men, as they were completing their choice from among the weeping captives, in the style, as they put it, of "the chirpings the envy of several of the Cannanites," and looked on, with Alice Foster by his side.

Then came the division of the property of the unhappy emigrants, and Joe managed to get, in that division, the two horses which, he knew from Alice, were the best in the camp. Somewhat to his surprise too, he had no difficulty in securing them; for the Mormons seemed to be set on having, in the way of animals, the same useful and solid qualities that they chose in their wives.

Among the rest of the plunder, which was distributed by lot, Joe drew a wagon and six boxes, which excited the envy of several of the "Angels," and when they found Joe was open to a trade, they were only too willing to exchange with him for what he wanted.

As the result of the morning's work, he found himself the proud possessor of two fine horses; and, with the aid of a pack-saddle, arms enough to provide him with four revolvers and a new rifle of the Sharpe's pattern, with a barrel like that of his own old Kentucky shooter, while his new captive had a side-saddle, and was able to ride with him, in the style of a backwoods belle.

But the "Angels" sneered at him for his choice; but the chief commandant him publicly, saying that "the new recruit would prove a warrior,

and not a plowman; and therefore he was wise to equip himself as a warrior alone, and leave the farm work to those who had entered the army of the Lord before him."

And, in all this time, Joe had the satisfaction of seeing that he had excited no suspicion in the mind of the Mormon chief, so completely had he managed to simulate zeal in his new faith.

Then the wagon-train, under its new masters, was put on the road again, and Joe had an opportunity to see the way the Mormons treated their captives, when they were women.

He had feared a terrible scene after the battle of the Mormons, but on that contrary, the Saints seemed to be bent on nothing but making their captives as comfortable and happy as could be done, under the circumstances.

True, they had murdered all their kinsfolk at one blow, but they seemed to be determined on making the women forget this, and realize that they were but a new life, where the old one would be sunk forever.

Joe heard Uzziel, who was riding near him at the side of one of the wagons, speaking to the stout Irish woman whom he had taken for a wife.

The poor woman was lamenting her fate and the loss of her husband, who had been shot in the massacre, when Uzziel said:

"Nora, hold thy peace; for it was the will of the Lord, and he hath given thee a better husband than thou hadst before. The wives of the Saints are not like the wives of the Gentiles, worn down with hard work. They live together like a band of sisters, and are even as the wives of the prophet Jacob, of whom thou hast heard, in that they dwell in the same tent."

"But what'll I do when poor Pat's in Purgatory, and niver a mass can be said for his soul?" asked the poor woman. "Ah, it's all very well for you to talk, when ye've killed the pore fella as if he war a sheep; but av ye think I'll forgit Pat so 'asy, ye make a big mistake, mister."

Uzziel frowned at her as he replied:

"Nora, knowest thou what is done to the woman who reviles her husband, in the church of the Saints of the Lord?"

Nora turned her eyes on him with an apprehensive glance, as she said, falteringly:

"No, sor."

"She is beaten with many stripes, Nora; and, if thou art wise, thou wilt forgit thy Gentile, and make up the mind to be happy with the Saint of the Lord. They that do so are honored among women, and their children are princes."

She was about to answer, when he shook his long whip menacingly, adding:

"But if thou art still-necked, then beware; for we will whip thee, and we are not wont to take any reviling from our women."

And there was something so fierce in his eye that the poor woman shrunk back into the wagon, in which she was riding, and said no more.

The caravan went on for the rest of the afternoon, and in the evening came out of the mountains in view of a great plain covered with a carpet of sage-green grass, that sloped down to the blue waters of a distant lake, that more resembled a sea, on the horizon; while in the midst of the plain, about ten or twelve miles from this water, lay a cluster of houses and buildings that looked like forts in the midst of high mud walls, that gave the town—for such it was—a strange, medieval appearance in the midst of the American continent.

The place seemed to cover a great deal of ground, and the buildings were embowered in trees, while the glittering lines of wide ditches and canals, that ran from the foot of the mountain range that bordered the plain, showed that irrigation had been freely used to make the wilderness lush.

The scene was full of beauty, and Joe could not help a thrill of pleasure as he looked at it. To his attention he had come, immediately in track to the spectacle of three wagons halted on the foot of the spur on which their own caravan was moving, in which he recognized the Scott and Gabelle equipages, with a guard of several Mormons round them.

"They must have come some other way," he said, with attention, as he thought this, the voice of Nephi called him.

"Son Joseph, come hither."

Joe left Alice, with a whispered injunction to keep where she was in the procession, and rode up to his chief who said to him:

"Son Joseph, thou hast come to-day, and thou art the best mounted of our party now. Take thy wife, ride down to that wagon, and



tell the men there to come with me. The Scotts will need no guide now, for they can see the walls of Desert for themselves; and they need to be watched, and I can spare none of my old men. We have work in another direction. Take them, and lead them toward the city. To-night they can camp where they are and to-morrow thou wilt bring them in at the east gate, where there will be men waiting for thee. Go, and speed thee."

Joe, with a beating heart, bowed his head and said quietly:

"I'll do it, deacon."

Then he rode off with Alice, down the hills, and saw that the Mormon caravan took another way by which to enter the city, while he rode to the wagons of the Scotts.

He found there several of the Mormon "Destroyers" and told them that the chief wanted them, an order which met with the usual unhesitating obedience of the band.

Then Joe found himself alone, for the first time since the arrival of the Indians, with the Scott and Gabelle family.

The Scotts seemed to be stricken with wonder at the sight of him in his new equipment, with the very pretty girl who was riding beside him; and the Scott girls, especially, came out to stare at Alice, with the undisguised curiosity of their nature.

Joe affected a curt and authoritative manner; told the father of the family what were the orders of the chief Nephi; and saw that the Scott brood was completely subdued by the splendor of his appearance.

He told them to go into camp, and they obeyed him, while he took Alice Foster apart a little way, and began to tell her what he had determined to do that very night.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE FLIGHT.

THE stars were shining like diamonds in the clear and unclouded sky over the valley of Great Salt Lake; the white tilts of the wagons stood like sheeted ghosts in the gloom; the mules and oxen were lying down by the camp, and the loud snores of the men and women of the Scott family showed that they were fast asleep, when Joe rose from the place where he had been lying alone, pretending to sleep, and approached what looked like a bundle of clothes lying on the grass near where two horses were picketed.

"Alice," he said in a low tone. "It's time, if ye dar' try it. I'm a-gwine; but ef ye're afraid ye kin stay hyar. They won't hurt you."

The bundle moved, and the face of the captive girl was put forth from the blankets in which she had been wrapped by Joe's fostering care.

"I was not asleep," she said, quietly. "I was thinking that you are the noblest man God ever made, and that I would rather go with you and be killed on the way, than live here among these wretches, though they should make a princess of me. I am ready to go."

She rose as she spoke, and the young hunter proceeded to saddle the horse, which he had taken as his share of the spoil the day before. He led them carefully away from the vicinity of the camp, to avoid rousing the sleeping Scotts. Within a quarter of an hour they were saddled and loaded, when Joe helped his new companion to mount her horse, and they rode away, silently as ghosts, in the darkness, taking the western route, by the foot of the great lake where the Mormons were settled.

Not a word was spoken by either till they had gone near a mile from the camp without meeting a living creature, when Joe said to his companion:

"Naow we kin talk, Miss Alice. Fu'st thing I got to tell you is this, to show ye ye needn't be skeered of bein' alone with me. I'm a married man, and the gal I married, not six months ago, is the one I love with all my heart. Ye needn't be no more fear of me nor ef I war yer brother. So don't git skeered about bein' hyar alone with me, for I'll take good keer of ye."

The girl all along with him in the starlight, put out her hand and said, quietly:

"I knew I could trust you from the first. Your face told me that. I am not afraid to be alone with you any more."

Joe felt his heart leap as she spoke, and he went on:

"Thar's another thing I wantar say to ye. My name ain't what them others calls me. My name—"

"Never mind telling me," interposed the girl. "I have trusted you under the name of

California Joe, and I don't want to hear any other name, till we are safe out of the perils that surround us. Tell me only this: what do you think of doing?"

Joe hesitated a moment.

"I ain't sure yet; but I've ben lookin' on the map, and I find, on the other side of the Salt Lake, thar's a hull grist of kentry we've got to cross, afore we git to California. Them Mormons is skeered to foller us, when they find we've gone, and hunt us down, ef they kin. We've got to trust to the heels of our horses, and to keep aout of the way of the Injuns."

Alice turned her head toward him in the starlight, to say:

"My father knew a great deal about Indians, and he told me, that after we had passed Salt Lake, we should find them peaceable and quiet, some of them friendly to the whites, and all of them very different to the men of the plains, who ride on horses and know no mercy. Besides, he told me that there is a party of United States troops, somewhere out here, surveying the country, and that we should be sure to meet them soon after we had passed the Mormon settlements."

"Is that so?" said Joe, pleased at the news. "Did he tell ye where they were likely to be found, Miss Alice?"

"He told me the fact is—"

Here the girl hesitated, and Joe said:

"Speak out, Miss Alice. What is it?"

"The fact is," said the girl, "that there is a gentleman—an officer in the party—who is an old friend of ours, and if we could once meet him, we should be safe."

"The sooner we make tracks to git aout of this darned kentry," said Joe energetically, "the better it will be fur us, Miss Alice. Hev ye any idee whar these sojers will be found?"

"My father said that they were somewhere in the mountains, by a place called Pilot's Peak."

Joe uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"The very place I were a-lookin' at, on the map, afore I come aout. We're on the straight road thar. The emigrant trail goes on the other side of the lake, and there's a desert march on the map, this side; so the Mormons won't think we'd dar' go that way, but I reckon we kin struggle along somehow."

"If you can do it, I can," said she resolutely. Then they put their horses to a trot, and went on rapidly for several hours, till the green carpet of grass that had so long been under their feet gave way to sand, and Joe said, with a sigh:

"We've come to the desert, and no mistake, Miss Alice. The question is, whether we kin push acrost it or not."

"We must!" she answered earnestly. "If we die, we die, but anything is better than falling into the hands of those wretches."

She urged her horse forward into the sand as she spoke, and Joe followed her.

All night long they rode, and when the first glow of dawn appeared in the sky, they saw a chain of mountains before them and managed to reach them before the light had become strong.

The prospect around them as the sun rose was bare and barren enough, but there were rocks that promised shade from the sun, which was hot and scorching at that time of the year, and a hiding-place from any curious eyes that might be scanning the country below.

Just as the sun rose, Joe drew up his horse in the shadow of a great rock, and said:

"Naow, Miss Alice, it's time we went into camp."

Alice looked round her disconsolately enough, but there was no help for it. The horses were hills round covered with sweat, and to take them any further in the heat which both knew was coming would be to distress them unnecessarily.

Besides, Joe, who had become a good deal of a scout in the course of his march from the Kansas, knew, from the lay of the rocks and hills around him, that he would probably find water near the place where they were, if he looked well.

The formation of the hills was such that it made a good many basins, and he went off on foot through the hills, till he found one of these which contained drinkable water, beside which he drew up his horse. To return to Alice and transfer the horses and mule to the basin, where they went into camp in comparative comfort, was the work of a short time, and the shade of the trees, with the water, soon freshened up the horses, which were looking gaunt and distressed.

They set to work hungrily at the scanty grass in the little basin, while Joe went back to the place where they had first stopped, where he scanned the plain to find if anybody was following them.

Nothing was in sight as far as he could see, and the rest of the day was passed in peace till about an hour from sunset, when he saw some dark moving objects, on the floor of the desert below him, which he soon resolved into horsemen, coming on the trail he and his companion had left behind them.

They were a long way off, but he could count the dots; for his eyesight had become trained to the clear atmosphere of the western desert, and he had acquired some of the Indian power of appreciating characters at distant things.

He realized that there were fifteen horsemen on his trail, and the problem of what was best to do, came to his mind at once.

If he remained where he was, the enemy, if such was the approaching party, would come up with him, and he would have to defend himself and his companion.

True, he felt confident that he could do so in the place where he was, and probably beat off anything less than a score of men; but Alice or himself might get hurt in the affair, and in that case nothing could be said to them.

But if he rode, he was certain that the foe were on his trail, he might run into another party, coming from some other direction.

Thinking over all this, he watched the party as he rode along, and noticed that it followed the very trail that he had come by, the night before.

Feeling certain that he had no time to lose, he went back and roused Alice; saddled the horses, and set off, in the twilight, through the mountains.

He took his course by the north star, that he saw gleaming over the mountain tops to the right, and traversed past after past, till the morning again began to dawn, when he and his companion found themselves at the edge of the range, which they had been traversing all night.

As the sun rose, they came out in view of an elevated plain, covered with grass, which rejoiced them greatly; and, far off in the plain, they saw something else, which gave them a start and caused them to hide hurriedly behind some rocks for fear they might be seen—a curl of smoke rising from a fire, around which were spread the white coverings of several tents, shining in the light of the morning sun.

There were others besides themselves in the mountains, and the question was, who were the strangers. The increasing light revealed the mystery, when Alice cried joyfully:

"See, see! The Stars and Stripes!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCLUSION.

It was indeed the Stars and Stripes, the flag of their native land and Government, which the fugitives from Mormon "Destroyers" saw as the sun glanced on the banner.

The distance was so great that they could not distinguish it plainly, but there was a flag on the top of one of the white tents, and it was of that general pinkish effect which is given by the American flag at a distance, while there could be no other that would be hoisted in such a place at such a time.

The horses were, not tired after their night-march, as they had been the night before; for they had gone at a much slower pace, and had had the advantage of a good rest. Therefore, when Joe proposed that they go on at once to the tents and find out what was the party there, Alice eagerly assented; and they rode off, descending the mountain as fast as they dared till they entered the plain.

As they rode down into the first green grass they had seen since they left Salt Lake, Joe looked up behind him and was surprised to see, on the summit of the ridge they had just left, the figure of a horseman, outlined against the early morning sun, in the distance.

The next moment came a flash and a puff of white smoke. The hiss of a bullet, dropping close to his horse's feet, showed that the "Destroying Angels" were after them.

As the bullet dashed up a little cloud of dirt beside him, Joe saw and felt that men come out behind the first, and a volley was sent down after the fugitives, which produced a disastrous effect.

Joe's horse staggered, then pitched forward on its head, shot dead, while Alice's animal, with a snort of terror, set off full speed, and the girl herself swayed to and fro in the saddle.



As for Joe, he saw that there was no time to lose. He was as yet unwounded, but he did not know how much longer he might stay so. He rose from the ground where he had been stretched, and taking the bridle of the pack-mule, ran off as hard as he could across the grass, trying to get out of gunshot as soon as he could.

Shot after shot was fired at him, and he heard the thud of the bullets all round him, while the pack of the mules was struck more than once.

The animal beside him ran fast, dragging him along, and he did hard work to keep it from twisting the halter out of his hand and leaving him alone on the plain.

But the other horse, carrying Alice ran on as if it knew where there was safety, and Joe saw it nearing the tents from the distance, while, from the appearance of several spots on the grass, between him and the tents, he judged that the occupants thereof had caught sight of the puffs of smoke, and were coming to the rescue.

At last the bullets ceased to whistle close to the fugitive, and Joe, looking round, saw that the horsemen had disappeared from the top of the mountain, and were coming down after him.

He knew that, if they caught him on foot, he would find no mercy from them, so he hastily halted; threw the pack off the mule; mounted, bare-back, and pursued his way under whip and spur.

The bay thoroughbred of Alice Foster was still before him and she could be seen still sitting in the saddle, but Joe had not forgotten that he had seen her say to and fro in the seat, in a way that convinced him she was hurt.

At last he got time to look back again. The whole band of horsemen, that had pursued him and his fair sister, were now clear of the mountain, and coming across the plain at racing pace.

Joe looked forward and saw that the strangers of the tents were still some way off, while the "Destroying Angels" were not half a mile behind him, and coming up fast.

They evidently hoped to catch and kill him before he could get to the soldiers; for such, he had no doubt, were the men at the tents.

The massacre of the day before had not been hushed up; and his death and that of the girl were probably necessary, for the safety of the Mormon community from discovery.

Joe plied the whip over the mule's back, in a way that astonished the animal, and managed to keep his distance for nearly two miles further, while he had the satisfaction of seeing that Alice was gaining on him and the pursuers, at a rate that showed the superiority of her horse.

At last the young hunter glancing back, saw that the Mormons were getting ready to shoot, and the determination to defend himself to the last took possession of him.

He halted and wheeled his mule, when the first shot from the enemy sent the poor beast down in a heap, and Joe found himself unable to fly any longer.

With the instinct of self-defense, but no idea that he was doing the very thing which a veteran on the prairie would have done in his place, Joe rolled over behind his mule. Steering himself behind the body he leveled his rifle over it and aimed at the enemy.

When they came at full speed, one after the other, as they had been strung out in the chase, and Joe, with a beating heart, for it was his first fight in earnest, since the trial by the Indians—fired at the leader, and had the satisfaction of seeing him tumble from his saddle, while his pony ran on alone.

He had found the sighting of his new Sharpe's rifle correct as that of the old Kentucky weapon, on which he had prided himself, and from that moment he felt secure.

The loading was so rapid and simple that he had a cartridge in before the pony had fairly flung its load of rider and fire, and a second shot at the next man in line just as he was about to return the compliment.

Again the true rifle laid its victim low and the Mormons, who resembled Indians in their ferocity, seeming also to resemble them in their dislike of death, faltered and halted in full sight for a moment, when a third shot sent a third man from the saddle, a corpse.

That settled the business, for they fled in haste, but still pursued the girl, passing by Joe as he lay there, and firing a volley at him, with no other effect than to make him hug his cover more closely.

Then, as they dashed on, he saw that the ponies of the men who had been shot had been

left by the rest, and he caught he could do no better than to try and capture one.

He saw that the animals had taken to feeding as soon as they were released from their riders, and he crept softly toward the nearest, keeping a sharp look out all the rest of the day, till the Mormons till he had gotten quite close to a pony which was too busy feeding to notice him, or too tame to run away.

A thrill of happiness shot through his heart as he caught the bridle, and in another moment he was on the back of the little animal and at full speed.

It did not take him long to catch up, for the Mormons were riding much slower now, as if they despaired of catching the girl; and he, putting the pony to the utmost speed, soon came up close enough to open hostilities.

To do this he halted the pony and fired a shot at the nearest Mormon, which sent the worthy out of his saddle, when the rest of the "Angels" turned and came back at him like a tempest, determined to kill him at last.

But the tables were turned now; for Joe knew he had the heels of any there. The pony he had secured was the swiftest in the party, or it was the best of the lot, and he got his first rider shot by him, when it did. He therefore kept the animal at sufficient pace to keep out of close action, while he began to try his hand at those flying shots which afterward became his specialty on the plains.

The Mormons replied, but they did not seem to be hurt, and he, and he managed to keep from getting hit, while he wounded two more men, and dropped a pony in its tracks.

In the excitement of the fight he had become forgetful of where he was, when he was roused by the whistle of a bullet close to him from the opposite quarter to where the Mormons were coming, so that he was aware that another party had come on the scene.

Looking round, he saw the blue uniforms of the United States soldiers, and his heart leaped in him as he recognized them.

With a wild yell he rode to meet them, while the Mormons turned tail and rode to the mountains, with a desperate speed that showed how they were completely demoralized.

A moment later he met the soldiers; and as they dashed by him, he shouted to them:

"Give 'em the devil, boys! Give it to 'em! They murdered a hull train, yesterday."

There were but a half-score of soldiers in the party; but as soon as the Mormons saw them they fled, with a desperate speed that evinced how much they were afraid of being caught.

In good sooth they knew that, if their secret practices and murders once got out to the world at large, and they were discovered, as they really were, the States would soon be too hot for them.

But the soldiers did not pursue far.

Joe, as he halted by the steaming horse which had carried Alice Foster to safety, saw that they were but the escort of a party of men, with surveyors' instruments and tents on whom they had come by accident, and when he rode up to the chief in command and told him what had happened, he received for reply:

"My good fellow, we have nothing to do with that. If the Mormons come here to attack us, we will defend ourselves, and report the fact; but as for your stories about massacres, we won't believe them; for we have been among the Mormons ourselves, and have found them very quiet, good sort of people; industrious, active and enterprising, and ready to help us on all occasions. The trouble with you is that you have been stealing from them, or something of the sort, and they wanted to punish you. It was about the right thing for them to do, in the way they were doing when we saw them; but since they have acknowledged our party and gone away, I don't see what else we can do. You can ride with us for protection for awhile, if you like; but I don't want to hear any of your cock-and-a-bull stories."

And indeed, that Joe could get out of the young West-Pointer who commanded the party, who had spent his time among the Saints to good purpose, and who afterward published a book to tell the world what very nice people they were. He absolutely refused to believe a word that Joe or Alice told him about the massacre, and insisted that they had been stealing from the Mormons, and were being chased therefore.

But the party was too strong and well supplied with provisions to make the journey any longer dangerous, and Joe had an opportunity to end whether Alice had been hurt or not.

He ascended that, when he saw her away to and fro in the saddle, when she started, it

was the effect of nervous fright and not of the wound that he feared, so that he was enabled to take her to California, along with a relief party, that came over the mountains with a train of provisions for the surveyors of Lieutenant G., and finally arrived at the city of San Francisco, where the young hunter had a right to the title of "California Joe," at last.

There he found that the uncle of Alice Foster, of whom she had told him, had set up in business for himself, and was rich already, so that the grateful girl was able to repay Joe for most hard-working men in those early days.

When they parted, Joe had become, as he thought, a pretty good plainsman, in the course of the journey, and spent the rest of the summer, and late into the next year, in the mines, seeking for gold-stuff, and finding plenty, as did most hard-working men in those early days.

The spring came on, and still California Joe did not think of leaving, for he had not enough to satisfy him; when he took a trip to "Frisco," after a successful month's work to "have a good time," as he put it to himself.

And when he returned, he was, for the first time since he had been in California, to the San Francisco post-office, and asked at the window, in his broad Kentucky twang:

"Say, mister, is thar a letter hyar, fur Moses Embrie Milner?"

The clerk hunted for some time and at last brought out a letter, faded from long lying there, with the remark:

"Lucky you come here, young feller, or that 'ud ha' gone to the dead-letter office in another day. Thought there was no such person."

"Waal, ye see," explained Joe with a grin, "that ain't the name the boys knows me by, for they call me the name of California Joe—why or wharfore nobody knows—but they give it me, and it stuck to me, so I don't kinder reckon it'll ever go from me. And what's the news in this hyar letter, mister?"

"How can I tell?" the clerk growled, impatiently. "Do you suppose I have got to read all the letters to men that don't know how to read. Get out and get some one that can read, to tell you."

Joe, considerably humiliated at the cavalier way in which the post-office man spoke, turned away, muttering:

"Tain't that I can't read. I'd have you understand, but this writing ain't the same as print, and I disremember the handwrite of this hyar."

Scratching his head, he suddenly exclaimed "I know what I'll do. I'll go to see Mrs. Hardy, and she'll read it fur me."

Mrs. Hardy had none other than Alice Foster, who had recently married the very officer of whom she had spoken when in the mountains, and who was in charge of a branch of the same expedition of which the unbelieving Lieut. G. had the chief supervision.

Lieutenant Hardy had resigned from the army and gone into business in the city where he was making a fortune very rapidly, and had built him a fine house, where Joe knew he was always welcome.

When the rough miner, in his best clothes rung the bell of the mansion and asked for Mrs. Hardy, the servant—a young girl from the East, engaged in at fifty dollars a month, as the cheapest that could be got in those days—after a glance at him, showed him into a parlor and took his name up to the lady, who came down a little later, with a baby in her arms, happy as only a mother with her first baby and good health can be.

"Why, Joe," he exclaimed, "and what has brought you here? I declare I am very glad to see you, and Mr. Hardy will be delighted. You must stop and have dinner with us, of course, and if you have any time to stay in the city we won't hear of your spending your money at those fearful hotels. You must sleep here."

Joe twisted his face, as if she had forced him into, with a violent attack of bashfulness. He had seen, since the girl had come to San Francisco and especially since she had married the army officer, that she was of a very different class in life from what he was, and the knowledge had made him bashful. But Alice Hardy was so kind to him, and so long, for she was as kind to him as if he had been her own brother, and continued:

"And now, Joe, what can I do for you to-day? For I know you would not have come here to see me so early if you had not had something for me to do. What is it?"

Joe grinned.

"Waal, the fact is, marm—"

"Call me Alice," she interrupted. "It







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